

THE DOCTRINE AND
DYNAMICS OF SIKHISM

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DR. JASBIR SINGH AHLUWALIA



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Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies,
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THE DOCTRINE AND DYNAMICS OF SIKHISM
by
Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia

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FOREWORD

Punjabi University has launched a project of publishing books in Punjabi and English, dedicated to the tercentenary celebrations of the Khalsa. In this series, 13 books in Punjabi have already been published and two more are in the press. Six books in English have been published and the process of publishing 15 more books in English have been set into motion. Reprints of four celebrated books are being brought out.

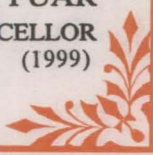
The present book entitled, 'The Doctrine and Dynamics of Sikhism', by Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia forms an invaluable part of this series. Dr. Ahluwalia brings to bear his deep understanding of and insight into the Indian and the Western philosophical and metaphysical traditions to bear upon the exposition of doctrine of Sikhism. The analysis and treatment of the issues, pertaining to Sikhism, is marked by the author's enviable grip on the modernist and the post-modernist idiom and perspective. The essays, contained in the book, are placed in a civilisational and inter-religious context. At places, the author makes a palpable departure from the beaten track of the interpretation of the Sikh tenets and thus makes an original contribution to the exegesis of the Sikh conceptions.

I take great delight in introducing this book to the serious students of Sikhism and trust that it will open up new windows on the landscape of Sikh studies.



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J. S. PUAR
VICE-CHANCELLOR
(1999)





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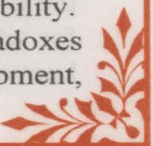
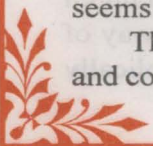


A VISION OF THE 21ST CENTURY (A POST-MODERNIST PERSPECTIVE)

Historical changes do not follow calendar chronology. Still the turn of the century, particularly when it coincides with the advent of a new millennium, is an occasion for hope that the future in some ways would be qualitatively different from the present and the past.

On the eve of the 21st century and the third millennium mankind hopes to say goodbye to an era—the 20th century—that saw apartheid; fascism; Nazism; two world wars; nuclear explosions; totalitarian communist regimes; monopoly capitalism; ruination of ecological balance of the planet; depletion of natural resources; species losses; human population explosions; pollution; man-caused global warming; hegemonic nation-states smothering the minorities; disintegration of social, religious and political institutions; religious fundamentalism; ethnic violence; violation of human rights and dignity, etc. The present century will also be passing on to the next century the ongoing processes of globalization of national economics; mind-boggling advancements in information and communication technologies; growing cyber civilization and above all the all-enveloping consumerist culture that has almost completed the transformation of human relations into exchangeable commodities. The alienation of man from nature, from society, and from his own self, seems to have been accepted with fatalistic inevitability.

The present century has been a period of paradoxes and contradictions. Growth has come to mean development,



and production has been equated with prosperity; standard of living takes precedence over quality of life. A technologically most advanced civilization, that in the beginning promised to make man the measure of all things, has ended up in reducing him from a subject into an object, a commodity, a credit card number. When existentialist philosopher Sartre proclaimed that existence precedes essence, he, in fact, was stressing the primacy of the individual in his integrality, who was destined ("condemned" in existentialist terminology) to make his own choice-right on wrong-as against any deterministic course prescribed by an outside force : God; State; Tradition; Reason; Idea; etc.

Today man's existentialist freedom is being swallowed up by a different kind of determinism—computer determinism—which is reducing existence into digitised data; this is a kind of determinism worse than its earlier varieties-theological, mechanistic and dialectical-in the sense that the latter forms, while diluting man's autonomy, still entailed one or the other type of value-system derived from the divine, natural or historical imperatives. Computer determinism may be defined as the computer-done information-processing, decision-making activities in which the human factor—the matrix of values—is eliminated.

The universe of values which informed earlier civilizations has given way to a universe of digits—a universe in which quality is reduced into digitised quantity. This did not happen all of a sudden; its seeds were there in the very premises of the Western (scientific) civilization that took birth a few centuries ago.

Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, appearing in the 17th century, at one stroke liberated exploration of the universe from the stranglehold of the medieval church for which revelation, and not reason, was the only way of knowing reality; leaving the realm of mind, symbolically

representing transcendental reality, for ecclesiastical authority; the realm of matter was made free for reason to explore it, the phenomenal reality, in terms of its own inherent forces, laws and sequences, without reference to any outside factor. Given a primal push by some mysterious hand—a concession to religious dogma—the universe was deemed to be following its own laws of motion with an endless future ensured by the postulate of conservation of energy. Reason, with its analytic method, was not merely accepted as the only mode of knowing reality but was also implanted in the womb of reality, making its very structure rational. Kant went to the extent of deriving morality from the supposedly rational nature of man.

Reason reigned supreme in nature, history and society during the first half of the 20th century when it was knocked off from its sovereign pedestal by its own self-contradiction, its own self-confidence. Postulating rational, law-following nature of reality, reason claimed that to know reality was just to know, with exactitude and definiteness, the causative (deterministic) sequence of phenomena—such was the belief in their law-abiding quality, with no question of any defiant, anarchic asymmetrical functioning. Reason took pride that it had succeeded in purging matter of self-willed arbitrariness, and in making it totally submissive to law in just less than four centuries while religion, despite the passage of many millennia, was still struggling hard to cleanse man of his recurring egoistic swerwings away from dharma. But micro-particles, asserting their (egoistic!) independence, refused to submit to the (classical) law, and in particular to the analytic method of reason. The mighty reason felt helpless before the obduracy, the indeterminacy of a tiny micro-particle, a sub-atomic entity, which refused to reveal its position and velocity at any single point of time, never coming fully unhidden, undressed, before the eye of

reason. The micro particle seemed to have a defiant "mind" of its own-the mind that Descartes had chopped off from the matter. Here was an unexpected collapse of the analytically knowable universe of matter divorced from mind; of the object dissociated from the subject; of the thing-in-itself independent of the knower; of the perceptual data existing associatively without the structuring role of the perceiver; and of value dissociated from fact. The inherent paradox of modern Western civilization became self-evident: great technological leaps forward on the one side, but the crumpling down of its threefold ideational foundation on the other side. The starting point, the basic postulate, of modern Western civilization, following Descartes, was that there was a universe of "objects" that not only *existed* independently of the mind but was also *knowable* independently of the subject. Secondly, reason was considered as the only valid way of knowing (material) reality, with its analytic method of dissolving the whole into its parts. The third postulate was that the structure of reality itself was rational and hence knowable fully, through reason, in terms of its inherent forces and laws. With the shattering of above postulates, reason faced an *impasse* which, in a sense, means the *impasse* faced by the modern Western civilization on the eve of the 21st century, necessitating a new metaphysical foundation for new civilization in the next century.

But this does not mean a regress from reason; not "going back" from reason to the irrational but going to the supra-rational spirit in which the rational would endure as the past endures in the present in an organism.

This means a quest for a new dynamic, creative principle in the sense of spirit. It is not the spirit dogmatised in religion. It is the self-realising spirit which is the very creativity of the Divine, the dynamics of the cosmos; the elan vital of history; the source of values for society and the very essence of human spirit. This spirit is

not an incarnation of world soul; cosmic consciousness; demiurge; nor is it a version of Platonic Idea, Aristotelian Form, Spinoza's Substance, Hegelian *Geist* or Bergsonian *Duree*. Spirit is not something esoteric or mystical, inwardly felt in intuition. Spirit is an outflowing current, an outpouring of energy; it is *becoming* in which novelty emerges in each new configuration; new qualities evolve that characterize the new wholes.

Spirit is not an entity or a being requiring an external medium for its self-expression and self-revelation; it, rather, instantiates itself in inter-connections; relations; linkages patternizing and re-patternizing themselves into organismic wholes within wholes, constituting, as such, a network of relations from the terrestrial to the transcendent. The rigid boundaries of the traditional pairs of mind and matter; soul and body; subject and object, noumenal and phenomenal, melt into fluid wholes of inter-connections; the old dualistic as well as monistic conceptions dissolve into a new "network conception" of reality in terms of organismic wholes within wholes, of systems nesting in other systems. Each system is a whole in relation to its parts, as well as a part in relation to other systems; each systematic whole at a particular level of inter-relationships exhibits qualities which are different at another level of inter-relationships and are not reducible to the qualities of its parts or constituents. In other words, this new conception of spirit involves what has come to be known as "systems thinking", a holistic view, which is qualitatively different from the analytic, dichotomous, disjunctive method of reason that was suited to the old conception of reality in terms of "objects" existing as well as knowable independently of the subject.

To recapitulate : "systems thinking" views reality as a web of inter-connections-inter-connections not merely between the observed phenomena but also between the observer and the observed, between the subject and the

object. Secondly, these (non-static) inter-connections constitute dynamic wholes within wholes—each whole being a system in relation to its parts, as well as a part in relation to other network systems. Thirdly, the qualities of a whole do not inhere in its parts; these qualities are, rather, characteristics of the configuration of the parts, the constituents. Fourthly, the concept of configuration implies subject-object relationship in the sense that the angle, the way, the method and the context of knowing, of observing and viewing, conditions the configuration of its constituents. So there can be more than one configuration of the same parts. Fifthly, what has been traditionally known as object, or substance (mental or matereal) is a configuration of relations, processes and events. Systems thinking is the epistemology of spirit, which in turn, is the ontology of systems thinking. This, in a sense, is a quantum jump in thinking, a paradigm shift, that has tremendous bearing on the evolution of the 21st century civilization, which would be a global (post-modernist) civilization based on the concept of spirit, distinguishable from the Western modern civilization founded on the concept of reason.

In this context practical, existential issues that the 21st century would have to address need to be referred to.

The most urgent issue is the safety and protection of earth and its ecosystem, of survival of life on this planet. So long as nature was considered as just independently existing matter, integrally unrelated to human beings, man thought himself free to mould it and exploit it for his material benefits. The laws of nature gave to man techniques and technologies; its resources provided raw material converted by techniques and technology into products for the market. Where has all this led to? Reckless over-exploitation of nature has led to irreplaceable depletion of natural resources which, if not reversed, would leave precious little for future generations. This is an alarming scenario particularly in view of population

growing at the rate of 90 million people every year, getting added to the present world population of over 5.3 billion. Apart from the depletion of natural resources, the production-oriented technology is upsetting the ecosystem of earth, with emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and chemicals tending to destroy the ozone layer; dumping of nuclear wastes in the oceans is another factor with dangerous consequences for life on the planet. Pollution is leading to global warming that would destabilize the climatic balance of nature.

All this necessitates exploring of new models of sustainable growth for the next century, that would ensure only such use, and to such extent, of natural resources as leaves enough for future generations as well, with stress on renewable sources of energy coupled with new technologies that would produce the goods as well as protect the planetary ecosystem and the environment. The first imperative in this direction is an attitudinal change towards nature, treating it in organismic, holistic "network bond" with man—a bond that recognizes the sacredness of nature, as stressed in Eastern thought and religions.

Next to protection of the planet is the issue of the very survival of life on earth threatened, today, apart from ecosystemic imbalances, by nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, all of which should find no place in the 21st century global society. The recalcitrant countries should be brought to their senses even by the use of force by an international authority with international sanctions: the aspiration for nuclear-power status, betraying hegemonic ambitions, more than national security considerations, should be blunted by both internal and external pressures which should be really effective. Such aspirations and ambitions are, in reality, the reflection of the present deified nation-state syndrome.

Modern nation-state has appropriated unto itself a godly status, godly authority, as well as godly egoism

dressed up as secular nationalism and paraded as the ideology of nation-state. This national egoism of deified nation-state has, further, usurped absolute, totalitarian authority over men and matters in the name of sovereign state. Sovereignty is an attribute of man and not of an organization whether religious (church) or political (state). In the 21st century society and civilization there should be no room for the existing type of deified states. National sovereignties should be recognised as inter-dependent on the one side, and as co-shareable, constitutionally and politically, by the constituent communities—as distinct from the nations—in the new pluralistic dispensation of the coming century.

The concept of the nation-state is becoming, day by day, outdated, thanks to the globalization and corporativisation of national economies, with gradual relaxation of trade barriers; the day is not far off when territorial boundaries would also become meaningless. The new political organizations of the future, replacing the existing exclusivist nation-states, would be of the nature of systems within systems—political, economic, social and cultural—in a global network of relations. This would require a truly representative international authority—say, re-organized, re-oriented United Nations—with both power and sanctions to enforce international consensus, anywhere in the world, on matters that threaten life of the planet and of man on mother earth. In this context the step taken at Rome in July 1998 for setting up international criminal court is most welcome. With an international authority gradually taking over the role and responsibility of national, regional and inter-regional defence, there should be no need for national armed forces by each country, which should have forces only for internal security, law and order. World currency and world citizenship, for free movement across the borders, are among the necessary steps towards evolution of global

civilization.

On the eve of the 21st century, there are only two choices before mankind : either continuation into the next century of the 20th century ideational, political, economic, social and cultural stereo-types; or a radical paradigm shift; either the carry-on of the present nature-devastating technology, or new models of sustainable growth; either the perpetuation of the present "value-neutral" consumerist culture, or a quest for a new value-system, a new value-oriented civilization based on the notion of spirit.

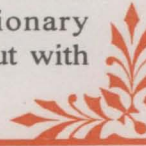


SIKHISM AND THE 21ST CENTURY

1

Religion in its broadest, general sense implies a belief that this-worldly earthly life and man's ethical, social, economic and political activities have sense and significance, value and validity, sanctity and legitimacy only with reference to some 'outside', transcendental reality or principle. Material reality, being considered dependent upon or derived from spiritual reality, is thought of as having no autonomy, no internal principle of dynamism of its own. The nature of the other-worldly value-source and of its relationship with this-worldly reality, and in particular with man, is differently perceived and conceptualized in different religions; but in their generality almost all religions—original Buddhism being a notable exception—invest earthly life with meaning and purpose in terms of some super-reality outside, behind or beyond the phenomena of time and space. This general belief, till the advent of the renaissance age in the West, resulted, on existential level, in the coalescence of the religious and the secular, and/or the predomination of the religious authority, edicts and institutions over the secular authority and its laws and institutions.

Modern civilization, heralded by the Western renaissance and other correlative movements, brought about a turning point in the relationship of the two domains through different routes—philosophical, sociological and political. The most significant and revolutionary breakthrough in old modes of thinking came about with



Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, which with one stroke rendered material reality both insulated against and liberated from non-material reality, thus paving the way for exploration of material phenomena in terms of their own internal, autonomous patterns, principles and laws, without any reference to the so-called transcendental ones. Philosophy of empiricism stressed that reality was knowable to man only through the senses and apart from the sensory made, man has no other intuitive, mystical or revelational access to reality. The unknowable—that not knowable through the sensory mode—became indistinguishable from nothingness, leaving it to the mystics to lend any substance, attribute or meaning to this 'nothingness' (*shunya*). On another level, this new (secular) mode of thinking brought in the philosophy of humanism, which asserted that it is man who is the measure of all things and not any 'outside', transcendental reality or principle. The normative in man's life is historically given and not transcendently determined—this was claimed by different varieties of historicism—evolutionary, dialectical, etc. Existentialism postulated that particular 'existence' of the individual is prior to and more significant than the 'essence' standing for the ideals that are treated only as secondary abstractions from the given particularities; the transcendental absolutes are thus totally knocked out from man's reckoning of what is significant in life. Freudian psychology would like us to believe that it is not God Who created man, but man who created God as a projection from within the sub-conscious repressions.

The cumulative result of the above philosophies and ideologies since the sixteenth century was that man's life, his realm of reality, derived its sense and significance, value and validity, sanctity and legitimacy not from any outside or noumenal or transcendental source but from within the this-worldly reality, from within the manifold of phenomena, from within the phenomenal reality, from within the concrete existence of man.

The above are some of the ideological strands that constitute the fabric of the modern (Western) civilization. The world view of the modern civilization is, essentially, influenced by dualism and dichotomy of reality—ontological and epistemological—coupled with reductionist methodology. The noumenal was demarcated from the phenomenal, the spiritual was separated off from the terrestrial; mind was cut off from matter; the transcendental was counterpoised to the empirical; the world hereafter was differentiated away from the world here and now; the sacred was opposed to the profane; the mental-psychological life of man seen as divorced from the physical aspect; the religious life of the individual was treated as unconnected and unconcerned with his secular (social, economic, political) life. Correspondingly, there prevailed the dichotomous view of cognition characterized by the externality and dualism of the subject (the knower) and the object (the known). The resultant world view—dualistic dichotomous, reductionistic, atomistic—is qualitatively different from a holistic view that treats reality in its concrete wholeness, integrality and inter-connectedness and inter-dependence. The traditional worldview, on sociological level, implied a differential view of society in which hierarchy is accepted as the normative principle of social organization. Secularism which is considered to be one of the highest achievements of the modern (Western) civilisation—as against predomination of the ecclesiastical authority over the secular domain—is also based on dualism. And in this dualism—which treats the spiritual-religious domain as distiguishable from the secular domain—lies the inadequacy of secularism in reconciling secular nationalism to religious nationalism. Writes Mark Juergensmeyer : "..... there can ultimately be no true convergence between religious and secular political ideologies."¹ Infact, secular

1. Mark Juergensmeyer : *Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, P. 197.

nationalism, political unitarianism (unitarian polity) and social homogenization—which, in a sense, refer back to ontological dualism, epistemological dichotomy and methodological reductionism—are correlative to each other and add strength to each other reciprocally. Western secularism has been adopted with some modifications in the developing countries of the East in the standard form of equidistance of the state from all religions. This kind of secularism having dualistically cut itself off from the spiritual domain of religion is *ab initio* incapacitated to positively accommodate within secular polity the variety of faiths and the diversity of religious communities, the self-identities of which are, then, sought to be homogenized and sublated into secular nationalism. A monolithic unitarian polity is, accordingly, sought to be erected on such an attempted homogenized social base. The nation-state demands absolute allegiance of the citizen to the exclusion of his all other allegiances to his religion, community, culture and ethnicity.

The contradiction of the religious and the secular nationalism is one of the main factors in the rise of religious fundamentalism the forms and courses of which are different in different countries depending upon the variables of time and place. The matrix of this contradiction is the dialectic of unitarianism and pluralism, which can be resolved only in a holistic view of reality in which religious and political pluralism would come to be seen as complementary to each other. This is how secular and religious nationalism would come to terms with each other, without the two being treated as mutually exclusive and without the one trying to subordinate the other.

The growing antagonism between religious nationalism on the one side and secular nationalism on the other side (which also marks a shift from class contradictions to ethno-religious, ethno-social and ethno-political contradictions) is just one of the consequences of the (dualistic) worldview of the modern Western

civilization. When we reflect back on the end-results of this civilization, the scenario that emerges, on different levels of life and society, is not encouraging at all. Exploration of the *mechanics* of nature, treated as existing independently of any organic, integral relationship with man—has not yielded insight into the *mystery* of life. Economic development and technological advance have widened the gulf between the rich and the poor countries; economic disparities have increased within almost all of the countries of the world. Economic development stands divorced from social justice. An equalitarian global dispensation is no where in sight. Human rights violations, not only by terrorist groups but also by the state, have come to be seen as a "routine" phenomenon. Violence in inter-community relationship as well as in intra-community affairs is escalating. Terrorism, including state-sponsored terrorism within and across the national borders, is on the increase everywhere. A new cold war is latent in international arena. Religious fundamentalism—the root cause of which has been referred to above—is not only affecting socio-political life but also eclipsing the liberal humanistic values and essentials of religion; the universalistic concerns of religion have been made subordinate to the parochial concerns of religiousity. Religions assertiveness casts its shadow over religious dialogue. On macro-level, the eco-system of the earth is under unprecedented strains that threaten the very existence of life on this planet. Consumerism as a "valueless culture" is much more devastating than merely as an economic activity which drives the material resources of the developing countries into non-essential sectors; consumerism does not produce the goods to satisfy the wants; it, rather, through high-profile advertisements, publicity blitz, exhibitions, fashion shows, "produces" the wants to cater to which are produced the goods. Material affluence among the upper strata is growing side by side with impoverishment of the soul. Man is de-humanized.

He has become a commodity, a consumer, a voter, etc. He has become an "object", no more remaining the subject.

2

On the threshold of the 21st century mankind is questing for a new worldview—a "paradigm shift"—a post-modern dispensation. Modern civilization—the ideological postulate and premises of which have been indicated above—is, in a sense, based on the primacy of reason. At the beginning of the modern civilization the philosophy of rationalism took reason as the only way of knowing reality. The concurrent school of thought, known as empiricism, held the senses to be the primary source of knowledge. Soon the two schools of thought joined hand for propagation of the view that (the known) reality was constituted by the application of the *active* categories of understanding onto the *passive* discrete sense-data received from the senses. The structuring role of reason led to the view that the very structure of reality is rational too. Kant stressed the rationality of human nature as well, and this rationality, with him, constituted the basis of ethical action and motivation of man. Reason was saluted as reigning supreme in all realms—nature, life and society.

Paradoxically, the inadequacy of reason was revealed by reason itself, when it encountered elementary particles which refused to behave in "rational" manner; they refused to disclose their simultaneous position and momentum at any given point of time. W. Heisenberg has sanctified this failure of reason, this "unknowability" of elementary reality, in the form of the principle of indeterminacy. Here was an *impasse* beyond which reason could not go in its understanding of reality. The notion of the objectively "given" reality, with rational structure in the traditional sense, knowable independently of the knower (the observer), stands knocked out. The knower and the known are being seen as intertwined, mutually inclusive and not mutually exclusive. It is being felt that the traditional (dualistic, atomistic, reductionist) view is incapable of

revealing the essence of reality, its mystery, its teleology. A new view—holistic—is needed that would see reality in its concrete (determinate) wholeness, in terms of integrality, inter-connectedness and inter-dependence—a view that would see the whole in the parts and the parts in the whole, envisioned as dynamic *becoming* and not static *being*.

This necessitates what is termed as "the paradigm shift" or the breakthrough of a new problematic in our thinking. This would not mean a negation of reason but going beyond it, to the realm of spirit. On the eve of the 21st century, mankind is seen turning to spirit. The Absolute is not indeterminate Being (Vedantic Brahman), not abstract Platonic Idea; not the *a priori* Reason; nor the existentialist particular but Spirit (*Karta Purakh* in Sikh religion). The post-modern concept is different from the Hegelian view that treated the Spirit's development (self-determination) only as a logical process and not as a temporal, historical process.

As religion is the realm of the revelations of Spirit from time to time, mankind, while approaching the next century, is looking upon religion in a new way : a quest for the Spirit pulsating in different faiths, as distinct from dogma hardened in different religiousities.

A true religion, like a prism, radiates out the Divine Ray into a variety of colours with an inner unity. Unfortunately when a religion becomes a dogma, it tends to contain, to imprison, the Divine Ray within its narrow bounds.

3

In the process of ushering in a new holistic world view for the post-modern global society of the 21st century, Sikhism can play a vital role both on metaphysical and sociological levels.

Sikhism is essentially a religion the basic category of which is spirit and not Vedantic being (*Brahman*). The Absolute in Sikh religion is not only *Sat* (being), *Chit* (consciousness) and *Anand* (bliss)—as in Vedanta—but also *Karta Purakh* (Creator). The Absolute, aboriginally

indeterminate abstract Being (*Ik Onkar*), *qua* Creator (*Karta Purakh*) becomes the determinate Spirit. God, as such, comes to have determinate relationship (*Satnam*), with His Creation (nature, man) which reveals Him.²

A number of qualitatively new metaphysical points—with revolutionary sociological implications—are involved in the Sikh concept of the Absolute as the dynamic Spirit. For the first time in the history of Indian speculative thought, Sikh metaphysics brought in the conception of historical time, of the historicity of time.

Guru Nanak, the first of the ten Prophets of Sikhism, used a very significant expression : *aad jugad*³ in his composition (*Japji*).

2. As I wrote in my book, *The Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrine*: A qualitative change in the mode of manifestation of the Absolute can be envisaged in the case of Sikhism which marks a transition from the religions of *being* to the religion of *spirit* in Indian philosophy. If we take the pre-Nanakian religions of substance (being) in their totality as the thesis, then, the antithesis is represented by the Sankhya philosophy, wherein the abstract universal substance is dualistically cut into two, as *purusha* and *prakriti*. This is an intermediary stage in between the earlier religions of substance and the latter religion of spirit (Sikhism). Here *prakriti* remains of the nature of substance in the materialist sense of the term while *purusha* is spirit in the idealistic sense; the relation between the two is that of externality.

In Sikhism, which marks the synthesis-stage of this process, there is the full realisation of the Absolute *qua* Spirit. The Absolute-in-itself is without any differentiations or determinations (*nirguna*, *nirankar*). As Creator (*Karta Purakh*) the Absolute manifests itself as Spirit.

3. The Nanakian concept of *aad jagad* reveals a new conception of the Real, qualitatively different from that of *Vedanta*. In *Vedanta* the conception of the Real is based on the (spatial) notion of time as eternity—a beginningless and endless continuum in which a thing eternally continues to be in its self-same state of *being*. This quality is termed as *sat* in *Vedanta*. Brahman is *sat* in this sense. The world of time and space, being subject to change, does not qualify to be *sat* (real). By accepting the historicity of time, Sikh philosophy comes up with a new conception of the Real which accepts the reality of change, of *becoming*. The world of time and space, as such, is real, though impermanent and subject to the processes of change. This had revolutionary implications. The Vedantic concept of the Real ensured the static equilibrium of Indian society; but it was stability at the cost of development which implies change.

[Contd. on Page 18]

To distinguish eternity of time from its createdness, *aad* refers to logical beginning and *jagad* refers to temporal, historical beginning. With its holistic integral vision Sikhism postulates that God *qua* Spirit descends in time, in history, in historical time, which, in technical language, means the Self-determination of the Spirit (in and through the created world) in time, in history, in historical time. The Self-manifesting Spirit is revealed in different religions from time to time. Hence, no religion can claim to be the full and final revelation. Guru Nanak stresses, in the *Japji*, the inexhaustibility of the attributes of the Divine and the relativity of the human modes of perception, and figuratively expresses this idea in this way : The brave sees God in the form of Might; the intellectual comprehend Him in the form of Light (of knowledge); the aesthete perceives the Divine in His aspect of Beauty; the moralist envisions Him as Goodness, etc.

Different revelations of the Spirit are like the variety of different seasons which refer back to the same Sun :

ਸੂਰਜੁ ਏਕੈ ਰੁਤਿ ਅਨੇਕੁ
ਨਾਨਕ ਕਰਤੇ ਕੇ ਕੇਤੇ ਵੇਸੁ

Numerous are the seasons emanating from the one Sun
Numerous are the guises in which the Creator appears

(Guru Nanak)

For Sikh religion, all revelations of God are equally co-valid, having been given to man relative to the variables of time and place. This rules out any room for dogmatic assertion of fullness and finality of any single religious

[Contd. from Page 17]

The *Vedanta*-influenced religions tended to have their focus in the next world, as this world was taken to be unreal. Hence the social role of religion was neglected, while Guru Nanak emphasized the social role of religion in changing the status quoist society and the system. Herein lies the dynamism of Sikhism which is reflected in the dynamic spirit of the Sikhs who have spread out to different parts of the globe as an enterprising forward-looking community. Dynamic self-continuity in the midst of self-expanding adjustments and adaptations is a cultural trait that keeps the Sikhs in the forefront, wherever they happen to go and settle.

revelation as well as for religious totalitarianism which is not accepted in Sikhism. Though Sikhism embraces the other-worldly concerns of man as well as the this-worldly concerns of society and state, it is not a totalizing ideology.⁴

All revelations being relatively co-valid, no "ism"—religious or secular—can claim to be the sole way to God, the exclusive path to salvation :

ਜਗਤੁ ਜਲੰਦਾ ਰਖਿ ਲੈ ਆਪਣੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਧਾਰਿ

ਜਿਤੁ ਦੁਆਰੇ ਉਬਰਿ ਤਿਤੇ ਲੈਹੁ ਉਬਾਰਿ ।

The world is ablaze

O Lord, shower your benediction.

Through whichever door it can be delivered

Save it that way

(Guru Amar Das)

This accounts for the basis and significance of religious pluralism in Sikhism. From here it follows that unity of different religions—or the global ethic—need not be artificially conceptualized on the basis of the lowest denominator common to all religions; it can rather be realized spontaneously on the basis that different religions are different stages of the revelation of the one and the same Divine Spirit manifest in different forms in different faiths. The descent of the Divine Spirit in time is, in a sense, the ascent of man in his spiritual development.

The conception of religious pluralism, as envisaged

4. The totalizing proclivity, inherent in secularism as the ideology of nation-state, and in religious fundamentalism, is one of the main reasons that make secular natinalism and religious nationalism incompatible with each other. The secularist nation-state claims to take into its embrace the totality of man's this-worldly concerns—social, cultural, economic, political—extending its right to "regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice" as incorporated in Article 25 of Indian Constitution. On the other hand, institutional religions, going beyond man's salvic concerns in the world hereafter, bring within their ambit societal and statal concerns as well. When an institutional religion turns fundamentalist, it appropriates into itself the right to prescribe its own dogmatic principles and practices for the entire societal and statal activities and affairs. The totalizing tendency present, on both sides, brings secularism and religious nationalism to a point of confrontation.

in Sikhism, provides a positive basis not only for co-validity and co-existence of different faith, in dynamic interaction with each other, but also for co-equality and co-existence of different religious and ethno-religious communities and their co-participation in the national body-politic of their respective countries. Here co-participation of the religious, ethno-religious or simply ethnic groups, or of the minorities based on religion, region, ethnicity, culture, etc., means co-participation in their *corporate* capacities, through their own political organizations, representing the social collectivities with their respective self-identities which in no case should be diluted, homogenized or sublated into an over-arching "secular" nationalism of the Western type adopted and adapted in the third world countries. Political articulation of communitarian interests and aspirations by the minorities—religious, ethnic, etc., should not be dubbed as communalism at variance with secularism.

In fact the holistic world view of Sikh religion brings forth a new plank for solving the dialectic of the religious and the secular nationalism. In Sikhism the relation between God and nature, including man, being that of the Creator with His creation, there remains no dualism between spiritual and phenomenal reality, the two domains are complementary to each other. Correspondingly, the religious and the secular (political) domain are not seen as dualistically cut off from each other; secularism or secular nationalism need not be erected on this artificial dualism and compartmentalization of man's integral religious, social and political life. In the integral, holistic view, the religious and the secular domain stand in relationship of complementarity and mutual compatibility on the one hand and relative autonomy on the other hand. This new model of secularism which would harmonize the secular with the religious nationalism is based, not on dualism, but on what may be called unity-in-differentiation.

Coming back to the question of the revelation of the

Divine, the Spirit-in-history realizes itself in "peoplehood", the sociological category of which, in Sikh parlance, is known as the *Khalsa*.

ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਸੂਰਤ ਏਹਾ
ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿ ਅਕਾਲ ਖ਼ਾਲਸਾ ਏਹਾ

(This verily is the phenomenal form of the Timeless Who manifests Himself in the corporate body of the *Khalsa*).

(Prehlab Rai, author of a Sikh *Rehatnama*)

ਖ਼ਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖ਼ਾਸ
ਖ਼ਾਲਸੇ ਮਹਿ ਹੋ ਕਰੋ ਨਿਵਾਸ

(The *Khalsa* is my determinate form; I am immanent in the *Khalsa*)

(*Guru Gobind Singh*)

Spiritual aspect of the Divine sovereignty is revealed in the Holy Word (*Guru Granth*) and the temporal aspect of the sovereign Spirit becomes diffused in the body-politic of *Guru Panth*. (The Hegelian Spirit reaches its fullest manifestation in the institution of the nation state which he identified with the Prussian state; on the other hand, in Sikhism, it is the "peoplehood" and not the nation-state which is the vehicle for sovereign self-realization of Spirit). Here is a new mode of the Divine revelation on societal level. The conception of the Absolute (God, Brahman, Idea, etc.), becoming manifest in space (nature), or in the Word, or in the soul, has been recurring in both Western and Indian philosophy, But the idea of the Spirit Self-determinating in history and then getting diffused, in the *Khalsa*, in peoplehood, appears for the first time, through Sikh metaphysics, in the history of speculative thought of the world. The *Khalsa* here does not mean a particular community in a particular form in a particular region; it, rather, means a commonwealth of enlightened human beings at a higher level of spiritual growth—a Divine Brotherhood of those who in the language of Guru Nanak are *sachiar* (embodiment of Truth and truthfil living) and in the language of Guru Gobind Singh are *juhhar*

(the socially committed and active for righteous cause). Here was a new revolutionary concept in the history of the world : Divinity in humanity and humanity in Divinity. Baba Farid, a muslim *sufi*, whose compositions are included in the Sikh Scripture, expresses this idea in the following holy words :

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਖਾਲਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ

ਖਲਕ ਵਸੈ ਰਬ ਮਾਹਿ ।

(Says Farid : God is present in humanity.

Humanity lives in the Divine.

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Prophet of Sikhism, carrying the above thought further, gave to mankind the following universalistic commandment :

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ

(Recognize all humanity as one in Spirit)

Earlier Guru Nanak had said :

ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ ।

(All partake of the same effulgent Spirit)

The human spirit partakes of the divinity of the Absolute Spirit. That is how the human spirit is sovereign in its inalienable dignity, worth and freedom. This Sikh thought, in a sense, heralded the ideals enshrined in the Preamble to the United Nations Charter which, inter alia, reaffirms "faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations, large and small."

We are celebrating in the year 1999 the 300th anniversary of that divine moment in the flux of time—the creation of the Khalsa Panth in the year 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh—that ushered in a new praxis the full potential of which awaits to be realized in the post-modern global society and civilization of the 21st century.

Let us bequeath the 1999 celebration of the human spirit to the next century and new millennium, which would, hopeably, usher in a new era for "peace, justice and sustainability", so poignantly stressed in the Millennium Call of the Millennium Institute, U. S. A., addressed to the

People of Earth. That the time span from 1999 to 2001 is envisioned as the Millennium Moment augurs well, for the future of man on this earth and beyond.

The Absolute *qua* Spirit, pulsates the cosmos; the Divine pulsation holistically binds man and nature in unity and inter-connectedness. Man and nature are no more seen as external to each other, being involved in inter-dependent network relationship, reciprocally conditioning the life of each other. Guru Nanak stresses this kind of relationship at the end of his composition *Japji* :

ਪਵਣ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ

(Air the Guru; Water the Father; Great Earth, the Mother)

The conception of inter-relatedness of man and nature places tremendous responsibility on Sikhism for addressing the problems of safety and protection of earth and its ecosystem and of life on this planet.

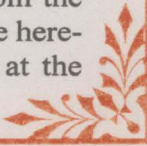
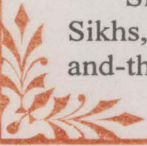


RE-DISCOVERING UNIVERSAL VALUES OF SIKHISM

On the threshold of the 21st century and the third millennium, arise two correlative issues: the role expected of Sikhism in shaping, alongwith other world religions, 21st century global society and civilization, and the destiny of the Sikhs in the next century. The first question relates to the universal values of Sikh religion, while the second refers to the existential concerns—religious, political, economic, social and cultural—of the Sikh community.

These two vital issues necessitate updating of contemporary Sikh awareness and its attuning to the emerging global consciousness. This is essential to ensure that the present-day Sikh praxis—both religious and political—coming out of its outdated, obsolescent grooves, renews itself to address the imperatives of the present and the challenges of the future. Paradoxically, the heightened Sikh self-awareness, during the last few decades, has led also to its becoming more and more self-circumscribed. On the eve of the 21st century the Sikh community cannot afford to continue living a windowless, monad-like, self-limiting existence, though the Sikh establishment, both political and religious, for its self-perpetuation would strive hard to preserve an orthodox, status quoist mindset easily arousable for electoral dividends.

Sikhism, today, needs liberation—liberation from the Sikhs, that is, liberation from over-obsession with the here-and-the-now concerns of the Sikhs in the Punjab at the



coat of its universalistic concerns. The Sikhs have to imbibe global vision.

The post-modernist thinkers, the world over, are veering round to the view that the concept and picture of nation-state, that held sway over the past few centuries, would become outdated in the next century. Globalisation of economy is fast obliterating the rigidities of political boundaries of nation-states, knitting them together into economic unions with common currency, free movement of men and goods. Modern tele-communication systems transcend the political barriers of traditional nation-states. On the other hand, no nation-state has succeeded in resolving the problems of religious and ethnic minorities; a homogeneous national entity is no more considered a realizable idea. The growing confrontation between secular nationalism, the ideology of nation-state, and religious nationalism in different parts of the world has led to emergence of religious fundamentalism on the one hand and retaliatory state terrorism on the other hand. Under such external and internal pressures, the days of the nation-state, which once seemed to be the ultimate political formation, appear to be numbered, as contended by modern thinkers. Efforts are afoot for evolving new politico-constitutional forms in keeping with the imperatives of globalisation of economy and the interests and aspirations of the minorities. The world seems to be moving towards larger inter-connected, inter-dependent economic unions having really autonomous regions, with minimum of inter-regional barriers and boundaries that the nation-state, mistakenly, considered so sacrosanct and inviolable. A United Nations of Europe on the one hand and autonomous Scottish parliament within the larger whole on the other hand is likely to become a new political paradigm for the future. The Sikh community must keep itself abreast of fast-changing developments, if Sikhism is to become a force worth reckoning with in global affairs.

But for playing such a role in the world arena, Sikhism

has first to re-discover its essential values : humanism, liberalism, pluralism and universalism.

Sikhism is a humanistic religion. The first Prophetic message of Guru Nanak—there is no Hindu, no Muslim—emphasized the primacy of the innate human spirit, partaking of the divine essence, with the implication that man's identity acquired from the variables of time and place, though important, is of secondary significance. Guru Gobind Singh re-phrased the same message when he proclaimed at the creation of the Khalsa that all humanity is one in spirit.

(ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਭੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ ।)

The old, classical conception of humanism was based on the contra-differentiation of the human (the terrestrial) and the spiritual, the transcendental. The new conception of humanism is based on the holistic, network, integral view of reality, with two implications in the present context. First, the human spirit is related to the Divine Spirit for the former partakes of the latter. Secondly man is bound to man in societal organism.

Liberalism is another cardinal value of Sikhism. Sikh religion is not a totalitarian ideology; it is not a totalizing creed binding man into the straitjacket of ritualism from pre-natal to post-death stage. The five *kakkars* worn after partaking of baptismal nectar are symbols and not rituals. There is direct communion with God, without mediation of the priest. (*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa*) There is no anointed clergy in Sikhism mandated to interpret the Scripture or to lay down code of conduct or to excommunicate a Sikh from the community, or to act as a watch-dog over a Sikh who is directly accountable for his deeds to the Guru and God. Apart from spiritual concentration on the Divine, ethically normative behaviour, and socially good conduct, a Sikh is left free in his private and social life. Doctrinally, there is no such thing as canonized Sikh jurisprudence; formalised Sikh economics or dogmatised Sikh dress. Those who insist on having the

beard flowing forget that the long hair are kept in a knot and not left untied. Those who decry wearing of gold ornaments by a Sikh bride do not get agitated at the encrusting of the spirit of Sri Harimandir Sahib at Amrisar by expensive gold-plating, first by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and now by the S.G.P.C., involving gold worth seven crores of rupees. These are just two instances of how orthodoxy is crushing the liberal spirit of Sikhism which needs to be resuscitated.

Further, pluralism-religious, political, cultural-is highly prized in Sikh doctrine. Sikhism does not claim to be the full and final revelation of reality and truth; what is divinely revealed is relative to the modes of perception and the variables of time and space. Thus, all revelations, all pathways, all modes and places of worship are co-valid—these being different phases in spiritual evolution of mankind.

Religious pluralism is correlative to political pluralism opposed to unitarian polity with its ideology of (old) secular nationalism with inherent tendency towards homogenization of social-cultural base. On the other hand, the holistic, network conception of reality envisages new political organizations—replacing the existing exclusivist nation-states-being of the nature of systems within systems in a global network of relations involving pluralistic dispensations, with co-partnership of the majorities and the minorities on equal footing. Says Guru Arjun :

ਸਭੈ ਸਾਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਕਿ

(All are co-equal partners in Thy commonwealth).

Above all, Sikhism is a universalistic religion in two senses of the expression. Sikh religion is universalistic in the sense that it is not tied down to a particular tribe, race, caste, class, ethnicity or region; it takes humanity as a whole in its open-ended embrace. That Sikhism today is found to be intertwined with Punjabi ethnicity is only a historical happening; the ethnicized Sikhism is just one of the possibly many determinate forms of the Sikh logos

that would, hopefully, have many more self-flowerings in other cultural environs, in other ethnicities. Contemporary Sikhism has to become a universal religion in the sense in which, say, Christianity or Islam became by spreading to other ethnicities. Christianity, originating within Jewish tradition, moved on to non-Jewish peoples, while Islam went beyond its original Arabic ethnicity and context to become truly world religion. Sikhism cannot be said to have so far become a world religion in this sense, as the Punjabi Sikhs are unable to envision a form of Sikhism outside the bounds of Punjabi ethnicity.

Doctrinally Sikhism is universalistic in another sense also; its essential concerns are universal for the humanity as a whole, though since the first Sikh reformation arising in the last quarter of the 19th century, the existential concerns—political, economic, social, cultural—of the Sikhs have become pre-dominant. This lopsidedness of the first Sikh reformation was due to the very survival of the Sikh community having become problematic; politically *Sarker-e-Khalsa* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the apogee of the Sikh struggle, but, paradoxically, the Maharaja's epoch was also the decline and decay of the Sikh movement that became feudalized, with Sikh society becoming Brahminized and Sikh doctrine coming under Vedantic shadow. The end of the Sikh Raj in 1849 plunged the Sikhs in abysmal crisis where the very physical survival of the Sikhs attracted a question mark. Naturally and inevitably the first Sikh reformation remained pre-occupied with twin problems of survival and revival that brought to the centre-stage the existential concerns of the Sikhs.

Today, we need another Sikh reformation that would, hopefully, restore the balance between the existential concerns of the Sikhs and the universalistic concerns of Sikhism.



TIME, REALITY AND RELIGION

(THE VEDANTIC AND THE SIKH CONCEPTION)

(1)

The problem of correlation of time and reality may be discussed under the following concepts : (a) Relation of time to reality (whether time is external to reality?); (b) Temporal order (whether time is *per se* non-directional, that is, isotropic? or anisotropic?); (c) Absoluteness or relativity of time (whether all events are co-ordinable in a single all-embracing temporal series of succession? or whether events in different frames have different temporal series all contemporaneous with one another to make possible the simultaneity of durations or fluxes?); (d) Structure of time (whether it is atomistic? infinitely divisible? or a stream-like permeation?). The answers to these questions depend upon points which refer back to the underlying conceptions of reality.

For classical materialism, time was external to reality, that is, to the events, From this angle, time became a space-like container of matter. With Newton¹ "Absolute true time", was there, "without relation to anything external". In this way, time had an ontological priority over reality (matter). To this basic tenet of classical materialism, the classical forms of idealism are complementary. Kantian idealism went to the extent of making time epistemologically prior to reality and, in this way Kant

1. Newton, *Mathematical Principles*, A. Motte, ed. Fcajori, Berkeley, 1934, P. 6.



provided a philosophic justification to Newtonism.² Whereas Kantian idealism denied temporal character of reality by making time epistemologically prior to reality, classical materialism did the same by making it spatialized, that is, a space-like container of matter implying its externality to time. A denial of temporality as a characteristic of reality is nothing but a denial of change as an inner characteristic of reality which, as such, becomes static, changeless, permanently selfsame. Barrow, the teacher of Newton, by holding time to be a space-like container arrives at the static conception of reality when he says that time is "the continuance of anything in its own being."³

The relational theory of time denies its externality to reality. Berkeley was the spokesman of this theory. In modern times, this theory has been expounded, among others, by Grunbaum and Reichenbach. But as we shall see, there is a radical difference between the conception of Berkeley and that of Grunbaum and Reichenbach. Bergson's theory is "relational" in the sense in which it asserts the internality of time to reality. The classical relational theory thought of time or temporality as a relation of events, the succession of which gave rise to the idea of temporal order. We find that for Berkeley, time (or temporal order) was a derivative of succession of ideas in the mind⁴, as against the subsequent position of Kant who wrote :

"For neither coexistence nor succession would ever come within our perception if the representation of time were not pre-supposed as underlying them *a priori*."

"Only on this pre-supposition of time can we represent to ourselves a number of things as existing at one and the

2. Milic Capek, *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics*, N.Y., 1961, P. 38.

3. Quoted by G.J. Whitrow in his *The Natural Philosophy of Time*, London, 1961, P. 132.

4. G. J. Whitrow, *op. cit.*, P. 74.

same time (simultaneously) or at different times (successively)."⁵

For the Empiricists (especially Hume), the relation of succession between two mental events was contingent. There was no inner necessary connection between the two succeeding events which would make the order of succession non-contingent or irreversible. This was in keeping with the Empiricists' conception of laws of association which externally brought about the togetherness of mental events. The successive order of events being reversible, the resultant temporal order, *ipso facto*, became of the same nature-reversible or, in other words, isotropic. The Empiricist school of philosophy, which gave rise to subjective idealism, shares with its opposite school, classical materialism, this supposed quality of time-isotropy. For both of these schools of thought, time is isotropic or symmetrical, meaning thereby that it, *per se*, does not carry any temporal order and is, as such, non-directional. The isotropic nature of the Newtonian time of classical materialism is given by its spatial character. If time is a space-like container, then, its instants are analogous to points of space which do not admit of any differentiation; *per se*, in terms of "before" and "after". Space being isotropic as such, the spatialized time comes to partake of the same characteristic.

This supposed isotropic character of time has been losing ground in modern times, particularly since the coming of the relativity theory. Time is now thought to be anisotropic (directional) in the sense that it, *per se* carries its temporal order in terms of which the relation of succession (earlier-than, later-than) is irreversible. The objective basis of this irreversibility of temporal order is given by the irreversibility of phenomena of modern physics. In other words, this anisotropic theory of time is "relational" in character. Time, in this case, is considered

5. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Norman Kemp Smith, 1950, P. 48.

not something (in itself) external to or independent of events (reality) but an intrinsic characteristic of phenomena. The irreversibility of succession of phenomena is the objective basis of the irreversibility (anisotropy) of this type of "relational" time. The relativity physics confirms the irreversibility of relational time. Writes Milic Capek : "Einstein himself admitted that the asymmetry of time is preserved even in its relativistic fusion with space...."⁶ Einstein's special theory of relativity states that there is an upper limit to the highest velocity of any cosmic action. The upper limit is the velocity of light. For this reason, the notion of instantaneous propagation of action at a distance (as contended by classical materialism) is shattered. If there are two events related to each other as cause and effect, occurring in one frame of reference in succession, then, according to the relativity theory, the temporal order of succession of these two events will remain invariable in all frames of references, because there is no instantaneous propagation of events conceivable now. This phenomenon of irreversible events, establishes the anisotropy of time within the framework of the relativity theory.⁷

The isotropic quality of time of the Empiricists and of the classical materialists leads to their rejection of the reality of change. This isotropy means that time, *per se*, is without any intrinsic directionality or temporal order; from here it follows that the instants of the isotropic time are not differentiable with reference to one another in terms of invariable, absolute relation of "earlier-than" and "later-than". But real change presupposes such intrinsic differentiation of instants of time. By "change" is meant that the temporal order between two changing states (of an object) is predicable in terms of absolute relations of "earlier-than" and "later-than". But if time does not have intrinsically any order, then, the very reality of change is

6. Milic Capek, *op. cit.*, P. 160.

7. Milic Capek, *op. cit.*, pp. 166 ff.

denied. A denial of change is nothing but a static view of reality. On the other hand, the anisotropic view of time implies differentiation of itself in terms of irreversible temporal order; so it admits the reality of real change, giving rise to the dynamic historicist conception of reality. Consciousness implies the anisotropy of psychological time⁸ which is what makes the stream-like character of consciousness possible.

Coming to the question of structures of time, we find that in the past two answers have been given to it : mathematical continuity and atomicity. The Newtonian classical materialism contended the mathematical continuity of time whereas the Empiricists took it to be atomistic, composed of discrete units (instants). The point may be explained by reference to a straight line which may be considered as a continuity or as constituted by a succession of discrete minute points (atomicity). Kantian idealism shares with classical materialism its belief in the mathematical continuity of time which is also known as infinite divisibility. This means that time is continuous in the sense that any duration or interval of time is divisible and the sub-division so obtained is further sub-divisible *ad infinitum*. Time is, as such, capable of infinite microdivisions. This is also referred to as the homogeneity of classical time.⁹

What is the bearing, on the question of reality, of time being *quanta continua* in the language of Kant.¹⁰ If time is of the nature of homogeneous continuity as discussed above, then, it follows that it confers no qualitative differentiation on an object (in such a time) which remains in the selfsame state in any microdivision of infinitely divisible time. To suppose that some micro-interval or micro-duration does invest the object with qualitative

8. Adolf Grunbaum, *Philosophical Problems of Space and Time*, London, 1964, p. 289.

9. Milic Capek, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-41.

10. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 204.

differentiation, peculiar to itself, would mean that that point of time is not homogeneous with the rest but heterogeneous. This is contrary to the definition of the classical time as homogeneous continuity. As such, all the characteristics, that an object possesses, belong and inhere in it *a priori*-none being derived from its location in any interval or duration of time. This is an anti-historicist view of reality.

We have already seen that the isotropic quality of time of classical materialism denies the reality of changes as inner characteristic of time. This quality together with the mathematical continuity of time leads to the classical materialist conception of reality as a substance to which qualities belong and in which they inhere, and which, as such, endures or continues to be in the selfsame state in time. In this sense, the mathematical continuity of time ensures the permanent, unchanging, endurance of substance (the reality of classical materialism) in time.

The time of the Empiricists is not continuous as above but atomistic; so, for them, there is no permanent enduring substance, physical (Berkeley) or mental (Hume). With them, what creates the illusion of continuity or endurance of a mental or material substance is the cinematographic succession (in atomistic time) of passing states. These passing states are not of any underlying object. The object is nothing but that particular state at a particular moment. This atomistic conception of reality, in the language of G.J. Whitrow, is "a metaphysical theory of momentariness of all things according to which everything exists but for a moment and in the next moment is replaced by a fascimile of itself cinematographically as it were. This theory presupposes the resolution of time into 'atoms'¹¹.....". Consciousness from this angle becomes a succession of "glow-worm sparks" in the language of William James.¹²

11. G. J. Whitrow, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

12. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, N.Y., 1918, p. 606.

There is, in a sense, a correspondence between the idea of infinite divisibility of time of classical materialism and its notion of infinite velocity of cosmic action. As the temporal interval grows smaller and smaller infinitely, the velocity of cosmic phenomenon becomes higher and higher infinitely. But, as the special theory of relativity places an upper limit on the velocity of cosmic action (equal to velocity of light) so, consequently the ultimate temporal interval can never be lower than a particular limit. This lower limit has been calculated to be of the duration of 4.5×10^{-24} second—a chronon.¹³ This is how the infinite indivisibility or mathematical continuity of time was shattered. A new version of atomic theory appeared as such in modern times stating that time was a succession of chronons. But any atomic theory, apart from its philosophical consequences, has certain logical contradictions. If between one atomistic time-unit (t_1) and another unit (t_2), a third cannot be placed, then, in that "betweenness", time does not exist or it stands still. It would be a strange proposition that there are "holes" in time in which there is no time. If it be said that there is no such hole or "betweenness" separating t_1 and t_2 , meaning thereby that t_3 can be placed in-between, then, it amounts to infinite divisibility and not atomicity.

Apart from this logical contradiction, the atomicity of time philosophically leads to the "momentariness" of reality as against its unchangeability and permanence guaranteed by the conception of time as infinitely divisible or mathematically continuous. There is a third solution apart from the "momentariness" of reality, or its static permanence. This is the dynamic, historicist conception of reality made possible by treating time as an indivisible whole¹⁴ constituted by the flow of time (anisotropy) of the past into the present. This view of time is compatible with the conception of reality of change as a process

13. Milic Capek, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

14. G. J. Whitrow, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

wherein the past is not lost but is assimilated into the present. Reality, then, is not synonymous with any particular passing state in the midst of change; it is, rather, the process of becoming, of qualitative transformation.

Is time absolute? Before the relativity theory, the predominant theories deemed it to be absolute-as, for instance, in the case of classical materialism. By the absoluteness of time is meant that all events are co-ordinable in a single all-embracing temporal series of succession with a cosmic 'Now' as a world-wide stretch, the occupation of which by the events at different places makes them absolutely simultaneous. But the relativity theory denies the absolute simultaneity of events at different positions of the stretch of the so-called cosmic Now.¹⁵ The relativity theory, as such, is a negation of the absoluteness of time; different frames of reference have their own different times.

The relation between these different times is that of contemporaneity; the different temporal series of succession of a person asleep is contemporaneous (though unequal being measured differently) with the clock-time of a person awake.

The various post-modernist conceptions of time can be consistently woven into what may be called a dialectical historicist theory of time. The dialectical process-thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis-is essentially an irreversible relationship; hence it invests the dialectical time with the anisotropic quality which is consistent with the relativity theory. As discussed earlier, it is the quality of isotropy which makes time spatialized, that is, a space-like container external to and non-participating in the events (reality) that it supposedly contains and, as such denies temporality and change as the inner characteristic of reality which thus becomes static, changeless. The dialectical time, being anisotropic, at once becomes dynamic, accordingly, having acquired characteristic of temporality and change. The

15. Milic Capek, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

dialectical time is relational in the sense that it denies its externality to reality and asserts its fusion with it. This is in accordance with the relativity theory which has fused matter with space and space with time. The fusion of the dialectical time with reality confers on the latter a dialectical character. Now, the dialectical process implies that A is A and non-A simultaneously. Accordingly, the dialectical reality would not be monistic but pluralistic in nature. Nevertheless, its pluralistic nature is of a special type; it is monistic pluralism-monistic in the sense that the same dialectical process is in operation everywhere. To admit the pluralistic character of the dialectical reality is to knock out the absoluteness of time, as it is absolute monistic view that entails the absoluteness of time. So the dialectical time is relativistic in the sense that it is a contemporaneity of different times or different temporal series. As the dialectical relation implies the interpenetration of the opposites as also the (modified) continuation of the thesis and the antithesis into the synthesis, so, from here, the dialectical time turns out to be of the nature of the Bergsonian *duree* stripped of its idealistic trappings. Only such a theory of time is fully compatible with the dynamic, historicist conception of reality.

It is often said that Bergson has de-spatialized time. On the other hand, there is Einstein who has integrated time with space to form a four-dimensional space-time continuum. The contradiction here between Bergson and Einstein is more apparent than real. The Bergsonian liberation of time is from that space which makes it (time) atomistic in the sense of a series of mutually exclusive moments succeeding each other like, say, electric poles in space or rungs of a ladder which in itself remains static. Further, it is emancipation of time from that space which made it (time) a sort of container of events like the Newtonian space. In fact, as Spengler says, such a spatialized concept of time (as container) is nothing but

rejection of time as time, and positing in its place another space along with the ordinary.¹⁶ So the Bergsonian despatialization of time means treating it neither as atomistic, nor as a Newtonian container, but perceiving it as a flow (as against the static atomistic time) which is not a container of events but the very matrix of them. As such, from the Bergsonian angle, to say that an object is in time is to mean that it partakes of time, that it is conditioned or created by time, that it is not thing-become (spatialized) but the thing-becoming (*la duree*). That is how the Bergsonian time is creative.

When Einstein integrated time with space, he did not do so by leaving space as a passive medium, substratum or container of matter. He, in a sense, de-spatialized the Newtonian space and attributed to it the conditioning or creative functions. Thus Einstein says :

".....in the minds of physicists space remained until the most recent time simply the passive container of all events playing no part in physical events itself. Thought only began to take a new turn with the wave theory of light and the theory of the electromagnetic field of Faraday and Clark Maxwell. It became clear that there existed in free space conditions which propagated themselves in waves as well as localized fields which were able to exert force on electrical masses or magnetic poles brought to the spot".¹⁷

This is how there emerged "a new conception of space in which space was deprived of its rigidity and in which its power to take part in physical events was recognized as possible."¹⁸

It was to such a notion of dynamic space that Einstein added the dimension of time to form a single unified space-time framework which became the real determinant of the qualities of an object in that framework. From this angle the attributes or qualities of an object do not belong

16. *The Decline of the West*, London, 1959, P. 125.

17. Einstein. *Essays in Science*, Philosophical Library, N.Y., p.66.

18. *Ibid.*, p.68.

a priori to that object but emanate from its space-time framework.¹⁹ This view is contradistinguished from the Lockean conception of an object as a substance or substratum with innate (primary) qualities of its own. Analogous to this Lockean notion is the Rationalists' view of mind, as substance with inherent, *a priori* ideas. This treatment of mind or matter as substance with inherent, *a priori* qualities implies a denial of the temporal character of reality,²⁰ because temporality means that no quality of an object (mind or matter) is an *a priori* or inherent possession of that object; the object derives its qualities from temporality: the Bergsonian *duree*, Einstein's space-time framework, or the dialectical historicity.

(2)

Religion envisions the Absolute (God in some religious philosophies; *Brahman* in Hinduism; *Shunyata* in Buddhism; *Ik Omkar* in Sikhism, etc.) as timeless.

Ordinarily the concept of 'timelessness' is interpreted in the following ways :

First, a thing is said to be timeless, when, though in time, it is not subject to or under the influence of time, that is, when it is not subject to the temporal processes of origination, development and disintegration. This, in other words, means that such a timeless thing has an essence, essential property, substance or substratum, that does not change at all and remains in the self-same state of being, irrespective of its location in any temporal instant or duration (past, present, future) of time. Time might affect its non-essential, secondary characteristics or its external form, but its essence remains uninfluenced by time. The Newtonian matter is such a timeless substance in time. Similar is the Sankhya theory of timelessness in the continuum of which the transformation of A (milk) into B (ghee) is only a change of form, and not a change in the

19. Christopher Candwell, *The Crisis in Physics*, London, 1950, p.11.

20. *History of Philosophy (Eastern and Western)*, ed. by a Board of Editors headed by S. Radhakrishnan, Vol. II, 1952, p. 206.

underlying substance which remains the same. The effect, B, preexists in the cause, A. The three causal *gunas* inherent in the Sankhya *prakriti* (substance). and subsisting in passive equilibrium, give rise to the effect in the form of the phenomenal world, when the initial equilibrium is disturbed. What is potentially pre-given manifests itself in a changed form. Obviously, there is no new creation, no novel development, no real evolution, as these concepts imply change to be the innate characteristic of time, whereby to be in time would mean to be subject to change, not only in form but in essence as well. But in the Sankhya *parinamvada* what is potentially pre-given and precontained manifests itself out in a changed form. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, applies to the Vedantic form of *parinamvada*; in *Brahmanparinamvada*, the *saguna Brahman* is only a changed form of the *nirguna Brahman*. Behind this secondary, phenomenal form is the primary noumenal substance which alone is the Real (*sat*) in the sense of eternal, timeless, ever-same Being in relation to which the world of becoming has either derivative reality, or no reality at all.

In Indian thought the quality that remains eternal or unsublated is indicated by the traditional term *sat*, which is not any determinate characteristic but is only the logical quality of "isness" of substance (being). The timeless-in-time, whether considered idealistically (Vedantic *Brahman*), or materialistically (Newtonian matter), implies an isotropic, ahistoricist conception of time called "spatial" by Bergson. Here time is conceived of as the space-like container of substance, and partakes of all the qualities of space : homogeneity, infinity; continuity; uniformity; directionlessness; reversibility and causal inefficacy.

The characteristics of spatial time, mentioned above, flow from its homogeneity which means that all temporal instants and intervals are in every respect equivalent to and identical with one another. Hence no temporal instant

can be said to be "before" or "after" any other instant. So there is no beginning, no end of time, which as such, has to be conceived of as uncreated. Time, accordingly, becomes infinite duration or durational infinity. Further, if time admits of no internal differentiation *per se* in terms of "before" and "after", then, the correlative concepts of succession, causation, change, origination, development, evolution, disintegration, etc., become meaningless and unreal. Hence the Real is that which remains eternal, that is, in the self-same state of *being* in infinite duration stretching from beginningless past to endless future.

As seen above, the concept of eternity implies infinite duration of isotropic time. For a consistent monist viewpoint there cannot be three simultaneously existing infinities—*Brahman*, infinite time and infinite space. So infinite time and infinite space must be deemed as aspects or dimensions of the ultimate reality—*Brahman*. As infinite time and infinite space are both devoid of "content", so their being the aspects of *Brahman* would not make the latter a determinate Being. Thus the ultimate reality, having infinite time and infinite space as its aspects, retains its abstractness as well as its timelessness, that is, its unchangeability. And by being so congruous with infinite time and infinite space, it comes to be seen as "immanent" in time and space.

The archetypal concepts and categories of Hindu thought such as *karma*, *sansara*, *reincarnation*, *samadhi* etc., partake of the isotropic, spatial conception of time. As distinct and different from the Sikh conception, *karma* of the Bhagavad Gita is "not action in time but action in Eternity." As regards the law of *karma*, says N. A. Nikam : "It is evolution through the infinities of space and time that is the field for the operation of the law of *karma*". Here evolution does not mean real development, which is something more than displacement in passive time and space, or a mere change of form. The Vedantic conception of change, of cosmological transformation, leading to the existential appearance of *sansara* does not mean real

change in the sense of an evolutionary process. The spatial nature of time implies that it is *per se* without any intrinsic directionality, or irreversible temporal sequence, in terms of "before" and "after", of the precedent (cause) and the consequent (effect), of the lower and the higher stage in an evolutionary process. Accordingly the Hindu law of *karma* (cosmological causation) entails cyclical, reversible succession (*avagavan*) in which there can be a transition from "ascent" to "descent", as much as from "descent" to "ascent". This viewpoint stands in sharp contrast to the Sikh conception which envisages an irreversible evolutionary process :

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਭਏ ਕੀਟ ਪਤੰਗਾ

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਗਜ਼ ਮੀਨ ਕੁਰੰਗਾ

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਪੰਥੀ ਸਰਪ ਹੋਇਓ

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਹੈਵਰ ਬ੍ਰਿਖ ਜੋਇਓ

ਮਿਲੁ ਜਗਦੀਸ਼ ਮਿਲਨ ਕੀ ਬਰੀਆ

ਚਿਰੰਕਾਨ ਇਹ ਦੇਹ ਸੰਜਰੀਆ

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਸੈਲ ਗਿਰਿ ਕਰਿਆ

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਗਰਭ ਹਿਰਿ ਖਰਿਆ

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਸਾਧ ਕਰਿ ਉਪਾਇਆ

ਲਖ ਚਉਰਾਸੀਹ ਜੋਨਿ ਭ੍ਰਮਾਇਆ

ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਿ ਭਇਓ ਜਨਮੁ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤਿ

ਕਰਿ ਸੇਵਾ ਭਜੁ ਰਹਿ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ॥

(ਗੁਰੂ ਅਰਜਨ)

(For several births you were just a worm

For several births, an elephant, a fish, a deer

For several births, a bird, a serpent

For several births served as a bull, horse

This is the moment of union with God—

Now that you have, after ages, evolved into the human form.

Many times destroyed in the womb

For countless times subjected to vegetative growth

Passing through myriads of species

Through communion with the Holy you arose into a man

Serve now the Lord, meditating on the Guru's word).²¹

(Guru Arjun)

21. *Sri Guru Granth*, p. 176.

This evolutionary process proceeds beyond the material domain, and comprehends the moral and spiritual development of man as stressed by Guru Nanak in his *Japji* wherein five successive stages (*khands*) are envisioned leading to the spiritual union of man with God.

It is due to the reversibility of spatial time that the three *gunas* can roll back into their original state of equilibrium of the Sankhya *prakriti*, thus ending the *sansara*. Further, it is the reversibility (that is, the cyclical nature) of time that makes it possible for Hindu thought to go back in time to regain the Paradise Lost-*satyuga*-in its quest for betterment of life, which, as such, does not remain a question of developing and evolving, in the future, new human and societal life-patterns.

The state of *samadhi* in which one could unaffectedly subsist for quite a large stretch of time is logically possible only on the basis of spatial notion of time in which it is conceivable to be timeless while in time.

The Buddhist theory of causation known as "dependent origination" (*paticca samuppada*) is also based on the spatial notion of time. The differentiation of instants of time in terms of "before" and "after" being ruled out in spatial time, the cause and the effect, then, must be seen as occurring simultaneously and not successively. This is the very essence of the Buddhist "dependent origination". Writes N. A. Nikam : "The peculiarity of the notion of the Dependent Origination is that it presupposes the notion of simultaneous occurrence of cause and effect...."²² This peculiarity, in fact, is the peculiarity of the underlying spatial, ahistoricist view of time. It was owing to such a notion of time that the Buddhist phenomenalism, despite its rejection of the static category of substance (being), could not result in a dynamic, historicist conception of reality, but got evaporated into the concept of "nothingness".

22. N. A. Nikam, *Some Concepts of Indian Culture*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1967, p. 31.

Modern thought under the impact of the relativity physics has rejected the static, isotropic notion of time in favour of the anisotropic conception, that is, "asymmetry of time"²³ involved in the dynamic, historicist view of reality. The relativity physics implies that no quality of an object remains eternal in time as well as in space, and further that an object derives its qualities from its location in the spatio-temporal continuum; in fact an object is nothing but a particular, mutable configuration of and in the space-time continuum. Thus the essence of an object lies not in its so-called underlying unchanging substance (*sat*) but spatio-temporal relationships. This is how the correlative concepts of eternity and substance are knocked out. The concept of timelessness-in-time (the Vedantic *akal*), which is the very core of Vedantic thought no more remains ontologically valid and logically tenable.

As against the Vedantic idea of *akal* (timelessness), the Sikh concept of *Akal Murat* refers to the supra-temporal, time-transcendent nature of God. Now time-transcendence is also conceived of in many ways in speculative thought. The time-transcendence of the ultimate reality in the Kantian sense is different from what it means in the Sikh thought. With Kant, the noumenal reality transcends time for the reason that time is an *a priori* form of mind external to the Real-in-itself. Time, here, is an aspect of the subjective apparatus of cognition, and is not a form, mode, dimension, condition or characteristic of the objective Being-in-itself,²⁴ which is timeless in the sense of being supra-temporal as such.

The Sikh conception is closer to the Biblical thought in that it considers time to have begun with the creation of the existential reality. God as *Karta Purakh* created not only the world, but also time as the mode or the constitutive aspect of the phenomenal reality.

23. Milic Capek, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

24. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. by N.K. Smith, 1950, p. 48.

ਓਅੰਕਾਰਿ ਸੈਲ ਜੁਗ ਭਏ ।

(God has created matter (mountains), and time (aeons))²⁵

ਓਅੰਕਾਰਿ ਉਤਪਾਤੀ, ਕੀਆ ਦਿਨਸੁ ਸਭ ਰਾਤੀ ।

(God has created all things, all beings. And day and night also).²⁶

A number of corollaries follow from this "createdness" of time. Time being created, the Creator must be prior to His creation both logically and historically, as envisioned in Sikhism. In Hegelian thought this priority is only logical, because here what is meant by creation of B by A, or development of B out of A, means only that B is logically deducible from A. Dialectical development for Hegel means only a kind of "deductive necessity".²⁷ Time being a created phenomenon, it cannot be treated to be eternally "there", either co-extensively or congruously with the ultimate reality. The durational infinity of time is also knocked out, as the created time must be deemed to have a beginning.

In this context we can understand the real meanings of the terms *aad sach*, *jugad sach*; *hai bhi sach*; *Nanak hosi bhi sach* in Guru Nanak's *Japji*. The term *aad sach* refers to the logical priority of (indeterminate) reality of the Absolute before creation of time, while the second term *jugad sach* indicates the historical priority of the (determinate) reality of the Absolute *qua* Spirit in the beginning of (created) time (aeons=*jug*). The third and the fourth expression refer to the reality of God in the present and the future respectively. Traditional interpretations, rendering the term *aad* and *jugad* as meaning one and same thing (in the beginning of time) have all failed to comprehend the distinction between the two concepts : one referring to the logical priority and the other to the historical priority of God.

25. Guru Nanak, *Sri Guru Granth*, p. 929.

26. Guru Arjun, *Sri Guru Granth*, p. 1003.

27. J. N. Findlay, *Hegel : A Re-examination*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1970, p. 81.

This distinction also reveals the "createdness" of time, that is, the nature of time with a beginning, as against the eternal duration of Vedantic time. Further, this significant distinction also provides a clue to the understanding of the key-note concept of *Akal Murat*, God is supra-temporal or time-transcendent in two senses. The logical priority given by the term *aad sach* refers to the time-transcendence of the ultimate reality as indeterminate Being, while the historical priority reveals the time-transcendence of the ultimate reality qua determinate Being that expresses itself in self-created time as the Spirit.

The new conception of God becoming determinate qua Spirit in time and space marks a qualitative change in the cognition of the ultimate reality : from Being to Spirit. This evolutionary change, heralded by Sikh metaphysics in the history of Indian religious thought, involves a new conception of time.

The concept of Being (substance) involves the notion of uncreated, eternal, isotropic (spatial) time which is the continuance of anything in its own being. On the other hand the idea of Spirit partakes of anisotropic time of which the conception of historical time, as implied in Sikh metaphysics, is one form. The Vedantic thought (in its generic form) is essentially based on the cognition of the ultimate reality in terms of Being (substance) with its corresponding isotropic notion of time which, divested of its essential temporality and historicity, turns out to be a static, space-like continuum, an unchanging state of being as substance. (Individual soul as a micro cosmic form or part of the ultimate reality is also conceived of as an "abiding substance") In other words the Vedantic conception of the *Akal* refers to the timelessness of the ultimate reality, that is, to its eternal, self-same state of *being* in the static continuum of time. This is contradistinguishable from the Sikh concept of *Akal*

Murat which refers to the *a priori*, in-itself, time-transcendence of God Who *qua* Spirit descends in historical time.

The point is that the connotation of the term *Akal Murat* can be properly understood only in the perspective of the view that Sikhism is essentially a religion of Spirit contra-distinguishable from the pre-Nanakian religions and religious philosophies (Vedantic) which partake of the concept of Being (substance) as the ultimate reality.

The concept of *Akal Murat* is the key-note term of the Sikh *Mul Mantra*—the quintessence of the Sikh doctrine. But almost all of its traditional interpretations follow the Vedantic conception of time and reality. As such the entire *Mul Mantra* is rendered in a Vedanticized way. Take, for instance, "*A Rendering from the Jap(u)*"²⁸ by Prof. Gurbachan Singh Talib. Herein, Prof. Talib has rendered *Sat Nam* as "Reality Eternal". The opening passage of the *Japji*—*aad sach, jugad sach*—has been translated as under: "The Eternal, the Holy ever was, ever shall be". Further, Prof. Talib refers to the "eternity" of God in the sense of His "immutability in all time."

With Prof. Talib and other scholars following the Vedantic tradition, timelessness of God means not a supra-temporal state, but a quality of being eternal, that is, immutable in all time. Eternity as a state of being (immutable) in time is a category applicable to the Vedantic ultimate reality—*Brahman* *qua* Being (substance)—and not to the Sikh conception of the Absolute *qua* Spirit conceived as *Akal* in the sense of being supra-temporal or time-transcendent. Herein lies the essential difference between the general Vedantic thought and the Sikh metaphysics. The Vedantic *Brahman*, accordingly, is envisaged in terms of *sat*

28. *Journal of Sikh Studies*, Vol II, 1975, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (India).

(being), *chit* (consciousness), and *anand* (bliss), but the quality of being the Creator is not attributed to it. Further, *Brahman* in Vedantic thought is *chit* (consciousness), but not "self-consciousness".²⁹ The above differentiation is essential for understanding the real, logically consistent, connotation of the *Mul Mantra* terms of metaphysical nature : *Ik Omkar*; *Sat Nam*; *Karta Purakh* and *Akal Murat*. The first term refers to the in-itself, indeterminate essence of the ultimate reality which is supra-temporal (*Akal Murat*) *vis-a-vis* the realm of time and space created by the Absolute as the creative Spirit (*Karta Purakh*). The Absolute through the creative act becomes determinate reality—*Sat Nam*—in the sense of determinate Infinity as against the abstract Infinity given by the category of *Ik Omkar*. As it is in the creative act that the abstract Infinite becomes the determinate Infinity, so the created realm comes to be seen as a determination of the Absolute, which in the Sikh idiom is called His Name :

ਜੇਤਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਤੇਤਾ ਨਾਉ ।

(All that He has created is His name).³⁰

The Sanskrit word *sat*, like the English term *being*, refers neither to the *ideal* nor to the *material* aspect of reality; it rather, connotes the *logical* aspect under which all that can be said is, that the Real *is*. In their abstractness the Vedantic (*nirguna*) *Brahman* (Being) and Buddhist *Shunyata* (Nothingness) tend to be indistinguishable from each other, for the simple reason that when the ultimate reality is seen as excludent of all determinations, qualities, attributes and predicates, then, there remains no (epistemological) way of distinguishing Being from Nothingness. As such, though epistemologically there remains no determinate

29. Wilbur Long, 'Religion in the Idealistic Tradition, in *Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective*, ed. by J-C. Feaver and William Horosz, D. Van Nostrand Co., London, 1967, p. 32.

30. Guru Nanak, *Sri Guru Granth*, P. 9.

distinction between the Vedantic *Brahman* and the Buddhist *Shunyata*, yet the former is posited in the logical aspect of "isness". *Brahman*, while sharing its indeterminacy and abstractness with the Buddhist *Shunyata*, is *sat* : Being-in-itself. It was to emphasize such logical "beingness" (isness) of the (*nirguna*, *nirankar*) Absolute that Guru Nanak placed the numerical one (as a sign of positivity in contrast to the Buddhist negativity given by the term *Shunyata*) before the letter *Om* to constitute the term *Ik Omkar* to symbolize "beingness" (isness) of the Absolute, notwithstanding its abstractness and indeterminacy.

Having thus contradistinguished his doctrine from the Buddhist concept, Guru Nanak, then, proceeds to differentiate it from the Vedantic *Brahman* which is *sat*, but not *Sat Nam*. In other words, Guru Nanak does not rest content merely with positing the *logical being* (*sat*) of the ultimate reality, but goes on to make the indeterminate Absolute manifest itself as determinate Infinity, *Sat Nam*, in the creative act *qua* Spirit.

Thus the term *Sat Nam* does not mean that "His Name is Truth", or that "His Reality is Eternal". It would be much more appropriate to render it as such : His Name (*qua* determinate Infinity) is True. It is in this sense that Guru Nanak says that all that God has created is His Name.

In other words, this term *Sat Nam* emphasizes the reality of the (relational) determinate aspect of the Absolute, as the expression "*Ik Omkar*" stresses the in-itself indeterminacy and abstractness of the Absolute, the positivity of which is simultaneously underscored so as to contradistinguish it from Buddhist *Shunyata* (Nothingness).

Reality as pure Being (substance) devoid of all determinations and qualities when approached idealistically takes, inter alia, the form of the Platonic (abstract) Universal, or the Vedantic *Brahman*. When

seen materialistically the (abstract) substance turns out to be the empty substratum, or the Kantian thing-in-itself. A such the determinate, phenomenal world of time and space is reduced to the Platonic appearance, the Vedantic illusion (*maya*), or the Kantian projection of the (epistemic) mental forms of cognition onto the thing-in-itself. Existential reality comes to be seen in terms of nihilism or solipsism. Sociologically such an attitude towards the worldly reality ends up in a status-quoist value-pattern. When the Real is taken as the abstract Being, for man there can be no ideal other than that of getting rid of all the sensory contents, or the determinate characteristics, that constitute the individuality of person. The resultant abstract individual is, then, amenable to being subsumed under this or that type in a totalitarian system. The lopsidedness inherent in this approach and trend is corrected in a religion of the Absolute qua Spirit. In the Indian context the transition to a religion of *spirit* in the form of Sikhism as against the earlier religions of *being* corresponds to and involves a process of change heralding the post-feudal value-pattern. Such is the revolutionary role played by Sikhism in the history of Eastern civilization.

The Sikh doctrine contains the potential, as well as the dynamics, of a new civilization qualitatively different from the earlier Indic and the Hindu civilization in India. This potential remains to be realized.

GURU NANAK'S VISION OF PLURALISTIC CIVILIZATION

Guru Nanak envisioned a new pattern of civilization characterized by the values of religious, cultural, economic and political pluralism. For this purpose, he brought in a new conception of spiritual and social reality.

The founder of Sikhism spiritualized material reality as creation of God (*Karta Purakh*) whereby the world of time and space no longer remained accidental in origin, purposeless in direction and illusory in character. He humanized spiritual reality so that there remained no unbridgeable gap of the kind that existed earlier between man and an aloof, transcendental God, as impersonal Being, admitting of no personal relationship with human being. Further, Guru Nanak socialized human reality so that man's life and activity came to have a societal aspect and social activity came to possess a humanistic character.

This threefold organic relationship, linking together the spiritual, the social and the human reality, is the basis of the Nanakian conception of pluralistic civilization that brought India to the threshold of the modern value-pattern, unleashing the revolutionary forces of change in world history.

Contrary to the erroneous orthodox Marxist view that Indian society had, over the centuries, remained static and stagnant till the British conquest that provided external push towards transformation, recent sociological studies have noticed the seeds of change within medieval Indian

economy itself. Sikhism not only reflected the intrinsic dynamics of change in Indian society at the ideological level but also initiated and stimulated the processes and forces of change, thus heralding the promise of a new civilization, different from the earlier Indic and the classical Hindu civilization—a promise that got aborted due to the colonial intervention and feudalization of the Sikh movement itself.

Guru Nanak doctrinally laid down four pillars on which he sought to erect the edifice of a new civilization. The first relates to the unity of Godhead, the significance of which transcends that of a mere religious concept, *Avtarvad*, despite being based on a unitarian view of the Absolute descending in human form, had in practice led to a multiplicity of deities whose worship in spatial, figurative form had resulted in idol worship that diverted attention from inner essence (*nam*) to outer form (*rup*). The atomization of spiritual reality had its counterpart in the atomization of social life reflected in religious contrarities, social differentiations, economic disparities, political fragmentation and cultural chaos—all of which together constituted the ethos of medieval India. In this context, Guru Nanak proclaimed his concept of the oneness of God (*Ik Omkar*) not only as a theological precept but also as a sociological principle that challenged the very basis of the hierarchized society, one manifestation of which was the caste system with differential ethics. Dharma as a complex of differential codes of ethics, different for different castes, had degenerated into a distinegrating force; it got rejuvenated as a unifying force with the Nanakian concept of unity of Godhead.

The medieval age ethos of India, referred to above, derived its ideological legitimation from an underlying conception of reality that the world of time and space was unreal (*maya*, *mithya*, *leela*); that man's real concerns were

not this-worldly but other-worldly. Consequently the stress was on individualistic salvation in the hereafter rather than on collectivistic amelioration of social conditions here and now. Guru Nanak gave a new idea of existential reality being as 'real' as spiritual reality; the former, being creation of God, partakes of the essence of the latter. This—the second pillar—changed the very perspective of values. This is how Sikhism stressed the societal aspect of religion which came to possess a new role and relevance as a sociological force. The institutional character of Sikh religion—an integral aspect of the doctrine—has grown out of this new conception of religion. Guru Nanak and the successor Gurus conceived of and created the Sikh institutions and structures as receptacles of the temporal sovereignty that Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day of the year 1699 at Sri Anandpur bestowed upon society, with the Khalsa as its determinate category—an act that through the baptismal ceremony of *amrit* transformed the Sikhs from a religious group into a political community.

Guru Nanak not only emphasized the facticity of the world of man but also the reality of historical time—this being the third pillar of his philosophy. The expressions *aad*, *jugad* in Guru Nanak's *Japji* refer to the distinction between the eternal and the historical time. It was the eternity of time that had given rise to the conception of India's classical philosophy that the Real is what is eternal, changeless and self-same in all times—past, present and future. On the sociological level, this formula provided for stability and equilibrium but at the cost of development and progress which requires the conception of historical time, admitting of the reality of change. Guru Nanak's conception of historical time impregnated static Indian society with the dynamics of change as its new principle of structuration. And the new society that Guru Nanak dreamed of was essentially of a pluralistic nature—the fourth pillar of his doctrine.

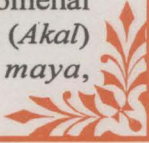
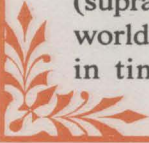
Usually those religions which preach the oneness of God tend to be totalitarian and entail a unitary polity. Such a religion claims to be the full and final revelation of truth and reality approachable through the one and the only path to God as laid down by that religion; the believers following the only true path are led to the kingdom of God in heaven, as also to a privileged position in society on earth; and the non-believers are condemned to the Devil in the other world and to the ghetto in this world. The polarity of the believer and the non-believer is stretched to the political level where it becomes the basis of a discriminatory polity. Sikhism does not claim to be the full and final revelation of truth and reality—such is the infinity of the qualities and aspects of God as stressed by Guru Nanak who did not turn the concept of *oneness of God* into the concept of *oneness of the path to the Real*. The approaches to reality, the doors of perception of the Divine, are as varied and infinite as God's qualities themselves are. The metaphysical postulate of the plurality of approaches to reality is the basis of Guru Nanak's vision of pluralistic society and civilization in which there would be no place for state absolutism, political totalitarianism and unitary polity, etc., which are, in a sense, correlated to each other.

The polarity of the believer and the non-believer, as in a totalitarian religion, re-appears in secular garb in the unitarian polity of the modern nation-state that seeks a uniform, homogenized social base eroding the self-identities of the minority groups—linguistic, religious, cultural and ethnic. Further, this type of unitary polity does not recognize the role, in the political apparatus, of the institutions and structures of the minorities. On the other hand, the pluralistic society, as envisioned by Guru Nanak, envisages the unfettered flowering of the respective self-identities of all sections of society; this necessitates a pluralistic polity in which the institutions and structures

of the minorities would get their legitimate role and place so that the minority groups could participate in their corporate being in the body-politic of society. Such are the imperatives of pluralism which modern civilization is struggling hard to realize. And in this struggle mankind can fruitfully look up to the ideas and ideals of Guru Nanak.

EVOLUTIONARY DYNAMICS OF SIKHISM
(CORRELATIVE PROCESSES OF NOMIZATION AND
INSTITUTIONALIZATION)

Sikhism heralded intimations of a new civilization qualitatively different from the earlier Indic and Hindu civilizations in Indian sub-continent. The Sikh doctrine introduced in the realm of speculative thought of mankind a new conception of reality, of God, man and society and of their inter-relationship; this new conception brought about a new problematic, a new world-view, being the zeitgeist of the modern chapter of world history. On philosophical level the most revolutionary idea brought in by Sikh metaphysics is the anisotropic conception of time, of historicity of time, as against the isotropic conception that underlies Vedanta as well as other metaphysical systems in India, Vedantic time is eternity-without beginning, without end-in which a thing continues to be in its aboriginal self-same state of being eternally. This provided the Vedantic definition of *sat* (reality) in the sense of *being* which in one form or the other informs other philosophical systems as well except Buddhism which evolved an atomistic conception of time. The conception of historical time, of historicity of time, in Sikh metaphysics marked the quantum jump from reality as *being* to reality as *becoming*. This was a perspectival change of far reaching consequences. The transcendental (supra-temporal) is real and permanent. The phenomenal world of man-being the creation of Timeless God (*Akal*) in time-is real and not an *illusion*, *mithya* or *maya*,



Religion comes to be seen in a new role as a dynamic force for transformation of man, society and state, encompassing not only spiritual concerns of man but also societal concerns in their totality. This new world view invests Sikhism with a distinctive, unique self-identity right from the very beginning; the essence becomes determinate in the evolutionary process determined by the inner logos, the innate spirit of the new revelation. In this process the Sikh identity becomes determinate in the Khalsa form institutionalised by Guru Gobind Singh. The community of faith-followers, as such, came to have not only individual identity of form (five symbols known as *kakkars*) but also a distinct corporate identity in terms of peoplehood. The build-up of the institutional form of Sikh religion was started by Guru Nanak himself who set up *sangats*, congregational units, during the course of his long arduous journeys, both in and outside Indian subcontinent. This institutionalizing process was carried forward by the nine successors of Guru Nanak; compilation of the Adi Granth; building up of Harimandir Saheb; erection of Sri Akal Takht being some of the most significant aspects of the intrinsic development of institutional Sikhism. The correlative process of nomization in the form of Sikh rites, ceremonies, ethical codes of conduct, modes of worship, conception of the sacred and the profane, distinct commensality, etc. also continued side by side. This was not intended to be *competitively* parallel or alternative to the Hindu or the Muslim cosmos. Guru Nanak exhorts a Hindu to be a true Hindu, and a Muslim to be a true Muslim. Guru Gobind Singh describes Hindu temple and Muslim mosque to be both contextually valid modes of worship. An institutionally oriented "revealed" religion necessarily seeks to nomize social reality in terms of its own vision and perspective, thereby creating a new nomos having potential to evolve itself into a new civilization. This new nomos-universalistic in nature-can be called 'Sikh' in the

demominational sense only for the reason that the community of the faith followers saw itself as divinely ordained (*ageya bhaey Akal ki*) to 'realize' this new nomos on earth. A point is often made that the stress on spiritual communion and moral values constitutes the essence of the Sikh category during the period of the first five Gurus, while accent on statal concerns and communitarian codes of conduct marks the later Sikh identity in its Khalsa form. This distinction does not remain valid when we take a holistic view of the spiritual, moral values and social ethics of Sikhism. In Sikhism, a Sikh's covenant with God, his obligation vis-a-vis the Divine expresses itself out in the category of *sachiar* ('realizing' truth in truthfulness) as stressed by Guru Nanak. His simultaneous obligation towards society manifests itself through the category of *ujhar* (righteous crusader), as accentuated by Guru Gobind Singh. A Sikh's obligation as a member of his community is given under the general category of *rahit* (code of conduct) that makes him *rahitdar*. Sikh code of conduct (*rahit*) is not a static, dogmatized form independent of the variables of time and space; it is a dynamic evolutionary category.

The obligation towards God, in a sense, reflects back in the form of the obligation towards humanity, towards society, as a whole. As such, the societal concerns of Sikhism are universalistic in character and are daily remembered in the Sikh prayer : *Sarbat da bhala*. The communitarian obligations of a Sikh have their significance in that these are imperatives of cohesiveness and solidarity of the community; these are subject to change and modification in their categorical form, while the obligations towards God and society are of the nature of Kantian categorical imperatives. But these three sets of obligations together constitute the connotation of the term Sikh. Thus the distinction between the earlier Sikh identity informed by spiritual-moral concerns-meditation (*nam*); sharing worldly goods with others (*dan*); and self-

purification (*ishnan*)-on the one hand, and the subsequent Sikh (Khalsa) identity oriented towards social and state concerns is only an artificial construction of boundaries between the two categories. Of course, the relationship between these three sets of obligations is of the nature of a 'structure-in-dominance' somewhat in the sense in which Louis Althusser has used this expression. Here various autonomous elements of the structure are asymmetrically related to each other, one element being dominant in the totality now and another element gaining ascendancy in a changed context. When self-differentiation of the Sikh community, in relation to the Brahminical inroads, started in the last quarter of the 19th century, it was but inevitable that the *formal* elements of the Sikh identity would come to be stressed more than the other elements in the given structure-in-dominance. Unfortunately some scholars see in this variance of accent on one or the other element of the integral structure a rupture, a 'break', and hence the passage from one Sikh episteme to a different Sikh episteme.

In fact identity (differentiation) and relatedness are the two aspects of the paradigm of Sikhism as envisaged by Guru Nanak himself. When on the outskirts of Multan, then a religious centre of various denominations, Guru Nanak is confronted with a cup of milk filled to the brim, the message was that India was already so full of faiths that there was no "space" for another religious dispensation. The Guru softly placed a petal of flower on the milk-filled cup symbolically conveying back the message that his new 'faith', while maintaining its petal-like identity, would in consonance, give fragrance to the milk.

Doctrinally, this metaphor of self-identity and relatedness (as distinct from rootedness) with other religious traditions and spiritual heritage flows from the Nankian conception of historical time in which the past inheres in the present without robbing the latter of its originality, novelty and identity. This also accounts for the

multivalent nature of the Sikh tradition and its consequent affinities with other religious traditions. This characteristic, while making the Sikh identity a self-expanding category, also at the same time makes it vulnerable to inroads into its vitals. It is pertinent to point out here that in the post-Banda Bahadur period, the feudalization of the Sikh praxis resulted in Brahminization of the Sikh society and Vedanticization of the Sikh doctrine, thus destroying its 'sovereignty' which had to be re-discovered afresh in the modern period. The potential of a new civilization inherent in the Sikh value pattern could no be realized owing to the correlative processes of feudalization of Sikh praxis, Vedanticization of Sikh doctrine and Brahminization of Sikh society.

In other words, the evolutionary process of Sikhism has not been free from aberrations; nor has it taken place in vacuum or in isolation from external factors and circumstances. These external factors and contingent circumstances have to be taken into reckoning, but the 'evolution', 'transformation', or 'development' of Sikhism cannot be exogenously attributed to such external contingencies and exigencies of circumstances. The point is that some of these historical variables-for instance Punjabi language-entering into the mediational process in and through which the universal in Sikh religion has evolved into a particular historical determination, have become integral parts of the Sikh identity the evolution of which has been of the nature of continuity-in-change. In other words, the terms 'Sikh', 'Sikhism' are not unitary static concepts.

Further, the categories 'Sikh', 'Sikhism' are essentially not of *a posteriori* but of *a priori* nature becoming determinate in an endogenous evolutionary course through the two-fold process of nomization and institutionalization. Sikhism is a "revealed" religion. Nomization of social reality in terms of the Sikh categories and institutionalization of the Sikh nomos, the nomized reality,

were implicit in the Sikh 'revelation' which I have described as sovereign in my book *The Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrine*.

Today Sikhism is at a crucial juncture of its history when for the first time in its history—after the Guru period—it is becoming self-conscious. The self-consciousness naturally entails self-differentiation. But it has to be ensured that this self-differentiation does not become contra-differentiation from other religious traditions in a way that could make contemporary Sikh praxis both sectarian and self-limiting.



THE ORDER OF THE KHALSA

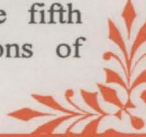
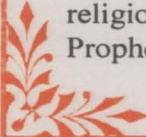
(SIGNIFICANCE IN WORLD HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION)

Sikhism, the youngest among world religions, arose over 500 years ago in (sub-continental) India. It surged up across the horizon as a great revolutionary force that changed the very course of Indian history. With its values of universalism, liberalism, humanism and pluralism, preached and propagated in the medieval age, Sikh religion introduced new elements which later flowered out in modern world civilization.

Sikhism, a unique 'revealed' religion originated with Guru Nanak (1469-1539 AD) who was succeeded by nine other Prophets—Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708 AD) being the last and tenth Prophet. It is a distinctive monotheistic faith envisioning one Supreme God Who is Creator also.

Sikhism endeavoured for a new dispensation characterized by the values of liberty, equality, justice, tolerance and non-violence, discarding discriminations of all kinds on grounds of creed, caste, class, race, region, sex, etc. God is realizable by man in his very earthly, household life, through spiritual enlightenment, moral responsibility, intellectual catholicity and social commitment.

The Sikh Scripture, Guru Granth (earlier known as Adi Granth), is unique among the Scriptures of different religions. The Adi Granth was prepared by the fifth Prophet himself who compiled holy compositions of



the earlier Gurus as well as of like-spirited Hindu Saints and Muslim Sufis. Later Guru Gobind Singh added to the Adi Granth the hymns of the ninth Prophet (with one couplet of his own). Before passing away, Guru Gobind Singh bestowed 'Guruship' on the Adi Granth, making it the Guru Granth, that is, the embodiment of the spirit of the Gurus. The Guru Granth—the divine Word—thus is revered and worshipped as the eternal "living" Guru by the Sikhs. The Sikh Scripture contains 5894 holy hymns in 31 ragas (classical musical measures) of the Sikh Gurus, Hindu Saints and Muslim Sufis—36 in all—from the length and breadth of (sub-continental) India, embodying the spiritual enlightenment and religious consciousness, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, with continuing significance and relevance for the liberation of man and amelioration of society.

A unique event of great world historical significance occurred at Sri Anandpur Sahib in India in the year 1699 when the tenth and last Prophet of Sikhism, Guru Gobind Singh, created the Order of the Khalsa through the sacrament of baptismal 'amrit'. The Guru thereby institutionalised the universal, humanistic teachings of Guru Nanak who in the medieval age had envisioned a new civilization characterised by a new value pattern based on the primacy of the human spirit.

Here was a unique message : the humanity of God and the divinity of man—a concept from which emanate, in a sense, the ideals enshrined in the Preamble to the United Nations Charter, which, inter alia, reaffirms "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small."

We are celebrating in 1999 the 300th anniversary of that divine moment in the flux of time that changed the very course of history, particularly in the Indian sub-continent.

This would be a historic occasion for the Sikh

community all over the world not only for introspection and retrospection but also for foreseeing and forethinking.

More than that, this would be an occasion for the peoples of the world to renew their commitment, on the threshold of the coming century, to the unfettered and uninhibited self-expression of the human spirit realizable in a new pluralistic world order.

This historic event—a unique cosmic play, the 300th anniversary of which falls in 1999—unfolded itself at Sri Anandpur Sahib, the city of bliss. Located in hilly surroundings Anandpur was founded by the ninth Prophet of Sikhism, Guru Teg Bahadur, in 1644. In this historic town is situated one of the five Sikh Takhts (the symbolic seats of temporal authority of Sikhism).

For unfolding the *Bachittar Natak* (cosmic event) at the mound (where now stands Takht Sri Keshgarh) at Sri Anandpur Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh chose the first day of lunar month of Baisakh (the Baisakhi day) that fell on March 30 in 1699 AD—now being celebrated on April 14. The beginning of the month of Baisakh symbolizes renewal and regeneration, ripening and fruition. Earlier, it was on this day that Gautam realized enlightenment and became the Buddha, heralding a new era in India civilization qualitatively different from the prevalent Hindu civilization and culture. Guru Gobind Singh purposely chose this day for ushering in a new dawn, a new chapter in world history, a new phase of world civilization, envisioned by the first Prophet of Sikhism, Guru Nanak. The Guru had asked the faith-followers from all over India to assemble at Sri Anandpur Sahib on the chosen day. The huge congregation became mysteriously innervated when the Guru with a divine glow in his eyes and a naked sword in his hand, gave a thundering call for a devout Sikh to come forward to offer his head, then and there for the sake of *dharma*. Guru Gobind Singh was putting to test

his followers' readiness for sacrifice of life—a sacrifice of the mundane life sublated into the Life Divine. Guru Nanak himself had laid down the test :

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ

ਸਿਰ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ

(If you seek to play (the game) of Love, then, enter upon the Path with your head upon your palm)

At the third call of the Guru, according to the tradition, Daya Ram (a khatri by caste) from Lahore (now in Pakistani Punjab) arose to offer his head to the Guru who took him into an adjoining enclosure. At the subsequent calls of the Guru, came forward Dharam Dass (a jat) from Rohtak, now in Haryana, in northern India; Mohkam Chand (a washerman) from Dwarika in Gujarat in western India; Himmatt Das (a cook from jheever caste) belonging to Jagan Nath Puri in Orissa in eastern India, and Sahib Chand (a low caste barber) from Bidar in Andhra Pradesh in southern India; they were also taken into the enclosure. The five self-sacrificing Sikhs had undergone a sacramental 'passage', a death-like experience for their celestial vision of and interface with the Spirit-Destroyer and Creator at the same time.

ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਖਾਪੇ

ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਥਾਪੇ

Salutation to the Destroyer of all, Salutation to the Creator of all.

(Guru Gobind Singh, *Jap Sahib*)

Clad in new yellow garments with blue turbans, radiating dynamism and determination, they were brought back before the congregation that burst into resounding words of *Sat Sri Akal* (immortal and ever-present is the time-transcendent Spirit). The Guru, then, amidst recitation of the Divine Word, embodied in the sacred hymns, stirred, with a double-edged sword, the water, in a steel vessel, sweetened by sugar plums, and thus prepared the baptismal nectar (*amrit*)—the elixir of courage and compassion—that was administered to the five Sikhs who came to be known as the Beloved Five

(*Punj Pyare*). They, with appellation of 'Singh' added to their names, became the first five initiates of the Order of the Khalsa created by the Guru through the sacramental nectar. Guru Gobind Rai became Guru Gobind Singh when he got baptized by the Beloved Five. The act of the Guru seeking baptism from his baptized followers, apart from revealing the democratic ethos of Sikhism, shows that God, the Guru and the follower become one in spirit; (ਅਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ); the moment of baptismal transformation becomes the moment of transanimation. This was a sacrament of resurrection, of spiritual ascent of man. The cosmic play at Sri Anandpur Sahib also pointed to the process of descent of God (qua immanent Spirit) in time. The spiritual ascent of man and the historical descent of the Spirit, in a sense, mark, under the generic category of the Khalsa, the evolution of sovereign man in direct communion and unison with the Divine Sovereign (*Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa*).

The first and the primary allegiance of the sovereign Khalsa is to the Divine Sovereign and not to any worldly state. This conception had tremendous instrumental value in Sikh praxis in opposing feudal state in medieval era and the same applies, *mutatis, mutandi*, to modern deified nation-state.

In the world's speculative thought, Sikh philosophy, in the medieval age, introduced a new revolutionary idea of far-reaching implication and futuristic significance. God in Sikhism is not merely indeterminate Being, but also Creator Who created material world as well as time. Metaphysically this implied non-acceptance of the Vedantic eternity of time, which meant the continuation of a thing in its original self-same state of being (*sat*) eternally, without change, development or evolution. Further, God is also envisioned in Sikh metaphysics as the creative, dynamic Spirit (*Karta Purakh*), becoming determinate (*Sat Nam*) in time, in history. The Spirit, through the Guru medium, descends in history to

become its operative principle, its dynamic teleology. The spiritual aspect of the Spirit (the spiritual sovereignty) becomes determinate in the Divine Word revealed to the Gurus; the *Adi Granth*, thus, becomes *Guru Granth* (the Sikh Scripture). The temporal aspect of the Spirit (the temporal sovereignty of the Divine) becomes manifest and diffused in the generic category of the Khalsa. *Guru Nanak's nirmal Panth* becomes the *Guru Panth*, the *Khalsa Panth* :

ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਸੂਰਤ ਏਹਾ

ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿ ਅਕਾਲ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਦੇਹਾ

—(ਪ੍ਰਹਿਲਾਦ ਰਾਏ)

(This verily is the phenomenal form of the timeless.

Who manifests Himself in the corporate body of the Khalsa)

—Prehlad Rai, author of a Sikh *Rehitrnama*

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮਹਿ ਹੋ ਕਰੋ ਨਿਵਾਸ

—(ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ)

(The Khalsa is my determinate form, I am immanent in the Khalsa)

—Guru Gobind Singh

Much later, Hegel described the modern state (identified with the Prussian military state) as the highest expressional form of the Spirit. The democratic import of the Sikh concept stands in sharp contrast to the tendency towards autocracy and totalitarianism inherent in the Hegelian notion.

The traditional modes of revelation of God known to religion and metaphysics are immanence or reflection in space (nature); indwelling in soul and manifestation in the Word. With Sikh philosophy appears for the first time in religious and speculative thought of the world a new revelatory mode : the concept of descent of God in time, that is, the Spirit-in-history. The cosmic event (*Bachittar Natak*) at Sri Anandpur Sahib in 1699 A. D. marks the sacrament of the Divine descent *qua* the dynamic Spirit immanent and operative in history—the Khalsa, in its generic sense, being the vehicle of the Spirit.

The baptismal sacrament at Sri Anandpur Sahib was

also a cosmic act of regeneration, an experience of sublimation through sublation, that is, dissolution. What was annihilated by the double-edged sword—symbolising the destructive and the creative aspect of God Almighty—was the past *karma* (deeds done under self-delusion) and its effects and imprints on the psyche that, seeping down into the sub-conscious and unconscious layers of mind, solidify into stereotypes, (*sanskars*) for the present and future deeds. What was created, through sublation of the past *karma*, was a liberated state of mind, no more under siege of the spirit-less customs and conventions, of empty ceremonies and rituals, of degenerating dogma and obsolescent orthodoxy. The partaking of the baptismal nectar awakened the dormant, slumbering spirit of man who rediscovered his divinity, his sovereignty, his humanity. Realization of the primacy of innate humanity—oneness of all humanity (ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਭੈ ਏਕੇ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ), proclaimed by Guru Gobind Singh at the creation of the Khalsa, meant obliteration of all caste-based differentiations; all hierarchical disparities; all gender-related discriminations, all creed-centred differences.

On another (empirical) level, the baptismal sacrament institutionalized the evolution, the endogenous development, of the faith-followers into a political community with a corporate identity, besides the individual identity predicated by the five baptismal symbols. Through this institutionalized corporate identity, the Guru wanted to create a mighty force in world history—as a temporal vehicle of the Spirit—for introducing a new societal order, free from evil, injustice and inequity; free from political discriminations and economic disparities; free from creedal exclusiveness. What was aimed at through the founding of the Khalsa, through the motor force for a new dispensation with a distinctive corporate identity, was the creation of a new world order characterized by

pluralism-religious, cultural, economic and political.

Though the five baptismal symbols define the individual identity of a baptized Sikh, yet their connotations are universalistic in nature. The five baptismal symbols are known as the five *kakkars* (the five K's) :uncut hair; comb; steel bracelet; short drawers and sword. These five *kakkars*, marking the visible individual identity, are symbols and not rituals or totems; their ritualistic wearing, without realising and imbibing the underlaying spirit, is homologous to Brahminical tradition of putting on *tilak* (sacred mark on the forehead) and *janeu* (sacred thread) rejected by Sikhism. The uncut hair symbolise the integrality of being, emphasized by the post-modern holistic view, as against the old dualistic view. The comb stresses the value of cleanliness and purity in personal and social life. The steel bracelet stands for the experiential presence of the Divine Whose beginning-less and endless infinity is represented by the circular shape of the symbol. The wearing of short drawers connotes chastity as well as the Sikh rejection of the ascetic tradition that equated nudity with the natural condition of man; this symbol also stands in sharp contrast to the Brahminical practice of wearing unstitched lower garment (*dhoti*). The sword is not a combat weapon for offensive or defensive action; it is, rather, a symbol of liberated being, of sovereignty of man homologous to the right of a sovereign people to keep the arms. Being symbols, what is important is not their external ritualistic display on the body, but the inculcation in the mind of their significance, their essence, animating the attitude, the deed, the very life of the faith-followers. These are the symbols reminding their wearer that he is to be *sachiar* (truthful living) in his obligation towards God; a *jujhar* (fearless fighter for a righteous cause) in his obligation towards society and a *rahit-dhar* (imbiber of enlightened code of conduct) in his obligation

towards the community. These three qualities together constitute the indivisible wholeness of the life of the Khalsa and its members; when the emphasis on the third obligation becomes accentuated at the cost of the two other ones, the five symbols become rituals emptied of their inner sense and essence (ਬਾਣੀ ਬਿਨਾ ਬਾਣਾ).

The five baptismal symbols have deep significance on ethical, social and political levels; they imply a new praxis for individual and social life. Sikhism visualized a revolutionary re-structuration of society, as a step towards a new civilization distinct from the earlier Indic and the Hindu civilization in India, in particular. The Brahminical system had absolutized the concept of fixity in social organisation, wherein the place of each caste, with predetermined role-structure, as well as of the individual in the caste, was considered to be fixed *a priori* in hierarchical order given by the law of *karma*. This system by transforming (in the language of Marx) "a self—developing social state into a never changing natural destiny", ensured stability and passive equilibrium, but at the cost of internal dynamism and evolutionary elan. Seen in this context the role of a Hindu *Avtar* is a periodical restoration of the balance, whenever the passive equilibrium of society gets disturbed. (This involves the cyclical-devolutionary view of time—a species of spatial time—in which history is seen not as an ongoing directional process, but as a series of the flow and the ebb, occurring in cyclical periodicity). The Sikh Guru is not an *Avtar*, not only on the ground that God is not conceived of as incarnating Himself in human form, but also for the reason that he is the initiator of a new way of life in the dimension of directional time. (*Path=Panth*) involving innovative structural changes in society.

Brahminical society permitted only 'positional mobility' of the lower castes in the hierarchical structure through a cultural process named

'sanskritization' by M. N. Srinivas; a lower group having circumstantially gained power or wealth would try to emulate the customs, manners, rituals and even caste-denominations of the higher caste for being accepted at a higher rung in the hierarchical ladder. As observed by M. N. Srinivas, this process of sanskritization meant only "positional change for the lower group without any structural change in the system." In fact sanskritization in a way reinforced the principle of fixed hierarchy in so far as it meant vertical mobility within the caste system. It was, further, retrogressive in that it diverted the lower stratum from self-acquisition of status and respectability in its own right, without losing the self-identity in the borrowed feathers of the higher class.

Sikhism played a revolutionary role on the sociological level in re-structuring society on equalitarian basis by rejecting the concept of hierarchical fixity as the tradition-honoured principle of social organization which had received its axiological legitimation from the caste-system, which in turn had the law of *karma* as its metaphysical basis.

The sociological significance of the baptismal ceremony of *amrit* lies in its being a revolutionary alternative to sanskritization. The baptismal *amrit* provided a new normative principle, process and channel to the lower classes for vertical mobility in their own right, without any sense of guilt about their respective self-identities, which, as such, were no more required to be sublated into simulated behaviour-patterns of the higher caste groups. Says Guru Nanak :

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ
ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚ
ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ
ਵਡਿਆਂ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ
ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ
ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ ।

(The lowest of the low castes,
 The lowliest of the lowly,
 I seek their kinship—
 Why emulate the (so-called) higher ones
 They elevating Grace is
 Where the down-trodden are looked after).

The lower castes and classes were, as such, provided an opportunity of vertical mobility upto the highest level. The new normative principle of social organisation introduced by the baptismal *amrit*, made people realise their essential humanistic identity with a sense of horizontal solidarity as co-equal members in the Order of the Khalsa which does not admit of fixed, stratified role-performance, nor the caste-based differentiation of connubial and ritual functions. Consequently this revolutionary normative principle provides for a new kind of vertical mobility that *ipso facto* involves an ongoing process of re-structuration of open society on equalitarian basis—a process that stands in sharp contrast to sanskritization that permitted selective vertical movement, while ensuring the foundation of the hierarchized, closed system of caste-based society and the concomitant caste-system.

The teleological goal of the Khalsa, for which it was created, as a motor force of history, under the Divine Will (ਆਗਯਾ ਭਈ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ) *qua* a community of the *sachiar*, the *juhhar* the *rahit-dhar*, was not simply, *individual* salvation in the world hereafter; or even *individual* redemption in the world here and now. The universal societal concerns of Sikhism, as distinct from the existential concerns of the Sikhs at any given point of time and place, constitute the teleological goal of the Khalsa presaged by Guru Arjun, the fifth Prophet, in the following words :

ਸਭੇ ਸਾਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਨਿ

ਤੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਨ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਜੀਉ

(All are equal partners in Thy commonwealth, with none treated as alien or outsider)

Here was a message for ushering in a new value-pattern, a new dispensation, based on the fundamental principles of equality, justice and compassion, liberty and fraternity; this was a divine manifesto for a new civilization (with the conception of *spirit* as its foundational category) on the pillars of humanism, liberalism, universalism and pluralism. Ontological dualism of mind and matter, and epistemic dichotomy of the subject and the object—that have characterized the Western civilization of the past few centuries—are both sublated into the unifying life of the "Spirit-in-history"—a concept that provides a new normative basis for the emergence of the post-modern civilization, the first intimations of which, appearing in the Sikh thought over 500 years ago, became phenomenally manifest in and through the creation of the Khalsa about 300 years ago at Sri Anandpur Sahib.



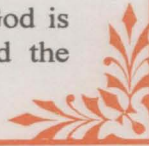
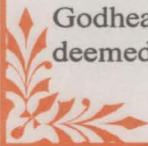
SRI AKAL TAKHT

(RELIGIOUS AND TEMPORAL SOVEREIGNTY IN SIKHISM)

Sri Akal Takht is one of the most sacred institutions of Sikhism. It has played historic role in the socio-political transformation of the Sikh people. That it is correlated to but significantly distinct from Sri Harimandir Sahib is indicative of the unique way in which spiritual sovereignty and temporal authority are conceived of in Sikh doctrine and institutionalized in Sikh history.

Notwithstanding its sacred character and high status, the nature of the authority of Sri Akal Takht is not religious in the theo-spiritual sense of the term. Its authority is homologous to the temporal power of state, rather than to the religious authority of the Roman Catholic Church. That is why Bhai Kahn Singh (Nabha) describes it as the *Raj Singhasin* of the Sikh community. Dr. Niharranjan Ray refers to the same aspect when he writes that "He (Guru Hargobind) also fortified Amritsar and built the Akal Takht opposite to Harimandir, dispensing justice and temporal orders from the former and spiritual guidance from the latter."

The nature of the authority of Akal Takht as envisaged in Sikh doctrine and as wielded by it in Sikh history can be best comprehended in the context of the basic postulates of Sikhism. Sikhism attributes to Godhead both spiritual and temporal sovereignty; God is deemed as *Sacha Padshah* in the world here and the



hereafter. For the first time in the history of religious thought, Sikh philosophy brings forth the concept of God-in-history. God's decent into time, that is, history, is through the vehicle of the Guru who as such partakes of the temporal as well as the spiritual sovereignty and authority. Symbolizing these two sovereignties Guru Hargobind, the builder of Sri Akal Takht, put on the two swords of *miri* (temporal sovereignty) and *piri* (spiritual sovereignty). These two attributes remained the prerogative of the Guru-Person upto Guru Gobind Singh who conferred the spiritual sovereignty on the Adi-Granth formalizing it as Guru Granth, while the Sikh Panth was raised to the status of Guru Panth or Khalsa Panth. The spiritual sovereignty of God having become embodied in the Word, Harimandir Sahib, with Guru Granth Sahib installed therein, as such, comes to be deemed as the highest seat of spiritual authority and guidance, while Sri Akal Takht is envisaged as the *symbolic* seat of the temporal, secular authority vested in the Sikh people.

That the two sovereignties are posited separately and are not seen as unified in a single person or a single institution after the Guru-period, reveals the great role played by Sikhism in the process of secularization of temporal power and institutions. It is pertinent to note here that in Sikhism, in theory as well as in practice, there is no subordination of state (temporary authority) to church (spiritual authority) or vice versa. Further, there is no coalescence of the two authorities as in the Islamic Caliphate. In other words Sikhism conceives of the relationship between the two authorities as of the nature of correlation. This is the essence of what is called the unity of politics and religion in Sikhism; it is unity in the sense of correlation and not coalescence or subordination of the one to the other. This doctrinal point is essential in understanding the nature of Sri Akal Takht and its role in Sikh history.

As Sikhism does not envision God in any corporeal form, no Deity or Vice-Deity is supposed to be presiding over Sri Akal Takht (the Eternal Throne) in the phenomenal sense.

Unlike the Pope who at one time wore two swords representing other-worldly and this-worldly authority (both religious and temporal) the Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht, like any other Singh, can wear only one sword partaking of the *miri* aspect and not the second sword symbolic of the *piri*-aspect. In this way the position of the Jathedar is dissimilar to that of Christian Pope or Islamic Caliph claiming regency of God on earth and wielding as such both religious and secular authority.

The Akal Takht priest has no inherent claim or right to dogmatize or pontificate on any fundamental issue of theological nature. In fact there is no priestly class in Sikhism entrusted with such exegetical functions or ritualistic duties.

The sanction behind the Akal Takht *Hukamnamas* and *Gurmata*s does not reside in any claim of the Takht clergy to inherent transcendental religious authority (in the theo-spiritual sense) but is rooted in its being the symbol of the collective will of Sarbat Khalsa who in the holy communion partakes of the Spirit, self-determinating itself in time as *historical consciousness*. This being the nature of the sanction underlying the *Hukamnamas* and *Gurmata*s issuing forth form this temporal authority, Sri Akal Takht can neither invoke nor administer divine displeasure, or spiritual censure against any person defying its edicts, injunctions and appeals. This of course does not mean that its verdicts have no binding force. The point is that the obligatory nature of the Akal Takht commandments is not because of any deterrent invocation of divine displeasure or spiritual censure, or temporal punishment but is due to the sanction of collective will of the Khalsa Panth in communion with the Spirit. Sri Akal Takht has never

administered any punishment in terms of condemnation to hell or to the birth-and-death cycle, or to any other form which may be expressive of divine displeasure and spiritual censure. Ex-communication and *tankha* (religious punishment) imposed by the Takht clergy are contrary to the Sikh doctrine, being of the nature of Brahminical practices. Akali Phula Singh's punishment to Maharaja Ranjit Singh was on a different footing as it was to uphold the principle of public accountability of the ruler.

The truth is that Sikhism doctrinally does not admit of the allied concepts of divine displeasure, spiritual censure, or God's wrath confronting man either as punishment for his sin or as a deterrent to keep him away from the sinful path. In Islam, there is the concept of God's wrath and operative factor in the nexus between one's disobedient act and its recompense. Says the Holy Quran. "And on whom-so-ever My wrath comes down. He indeed falls down to a depth". But the position in Sikhism is different. There is, on the other hand, in Sikh religion the concept of causation whereby the positive or the negative reward, that is, the recompense, is the effect, the cause of which is one's own action. There is no room for the mediation of divine pleasure or displeasure in this causality, except when God grants redemption to man as a token of His grace (*nadar*). Sikh religion envisions God as benevolent and not malevolent. Even when man fails or falters in his allegiance to God, in his observance of divine commandments, the punishment that he gets is not of the type of divine displeasure (condemning him to hell, etc.), but is of temporal nature at the hands of temporal authority, implying thereby that man's relationship to God has bearing on his relationship to state and society. Says Guru Gobind Singh : The spiritual state (the House of Baba Nanak) and the temporal state (symbolically referred to as the House of Babur) are both *a priori*

institutions (as creations of God.) Those who do not abide by their allegiance to God (and defying Him turn to the worldly state instead), suffer at the hands of the worldly state itself".

As history of religious thought shows there appears at the earlier, lower stage the concept of divine displeasure and of God's wrath, serving as a deterrent to keep man on the righteous path. At the higher stage, the stress is one arousing moral consciousness in man. Awakened moral consciousness, inwardly binding on man, takes the place of external deterrence in the form of divine displeasure and wrath. In Sikhism, which is one of the higher religions, there is no concept of a revengeful, wrathful God, man is persuaded onto righteous path of goodness not out of fear (say, of hell), or temptation (say, of heaven), but out of awakening of moral consciousness. Even when one falters in religious allegiance to God (the House of Nanak), the punishment is not in terms of divine displeasure, or God's anger. By turning his back to the House of Nanak (spiritual state) man suffers, ironically, at the hands of the worldly state itself. Here again the stress is on a moral state of consciousness in which man realises that loyalty to the worldly state at the cost of spiritual state in the end proves self-destructive. There is no question of administering punishment, as that would bring by the back door, the concept of a revengeful God who administers justice in a tit-for-tat manner in a hidden way-by proxy.

If the temporal authority of Sri Akal Takht cannot take recourse to the fiat of divine displeasure, it can also not grant remission of sins in the way in which, for instance, Pope Leo X did through sale of indulgences when he needed funds to complete St. Peter's church in Rome; Sri Akal Takht being a temporal authority has no such religious power as claimed by the Church for itself.

In accordance with the nature of its authority, the Akal Takht *Hukamnamas* and *Gurmata*s have been of temporal nature touching on political or at the most socio-political problems faced by *the community as a whole*. It was only once that the Takht issued a *Hukamnama* in 1928 on a theological issue when Teja Singh Bhasaur and his Panch Khalsa Diwan brought out an edition of Sri Guru Granth Sahib which was different from its traditional pattern; among other things the new edition omitted Ragmala from the Granth. But Sri Akal Takht intervened against the new edition not *suo moto*, but on being approached by the Sikh theologians and intellectuals whose deliberations had met with general approval of the community.

Guru Hargobind, who issued the first-ever *Hukamnama* from Sri Akal Takht, set the pattern for the subsequent invocation of the (temporal) authority of this sacred seat. In his first *Hukamnama*, he called upon his followers to bring offerings of arms and horses. This was in assertion of the Guru's temporal authority claiming an inherent right to possess arms and maintain forces. Since then Sri Akal Takht has played historic role in the socio-political affairs of the Sikhs, particularly during the eighteenth century when the community was waging a determined and dynamic struggle for political ascendancy in Punjab. During this period the Sikhs in the form of Sarbat Khalsa held biennial meetings at Sri Akal Takht on the days of Baisakhi and Diwali. It was in such a Sarbat Khalsa meeting at Sri Akal Takht that the offer of a Jagir (Nawabship) was accepted by the Sikhs, thus striking a truce with the Delhi Government in 1833 to gain time for their next re-strengthened onslaught. Dal Khalsa (not to be confused with a recently formed body that has borrowed this name), the politico-military body corporate of the fighting forces of the community was also resolved to be formed in a congregation at Sri Akal

Takht on the Baisakhi day of the year 1748.

The introduction of Rakhi system (protectorate) in the areas liberated by the Sikhs Misls was also resolved through a *Gurmata*s at Sri Akal Takhat in 1753. When the Maratha ruler, Holkar, defeated and chased by the English forces under Lord Lake, sought help from Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the matter was referred to the Sarbat Khalsa meeting at Sri Akal Takhat in 1805. Shiromani Akali Dal also owes its birth to the resolve of the Sikh congregation at this holy seat in 1920. Being the *symbolic* seat of temporal power vested in the Sikh community, Sri Akal Takhat has played notable part in restoring unity in the Sikh folds *while retaining its non-partisan character*. It was Bhai Mani Singh who, as head of the Takht took cognizance of the dissensions between *Bandai Khalsa* and *Tat Khalsa*, and put an end to the infighting between the two forces.

By virtue of its high and sacred character, Sri Akal Takhat continues shaping the socio-political destiny of the Sikh people as a whole.

However a clear distinction between Sri Akal Takht, as an institution, and its Hukamnamas expressing the collective will of the community in communion with the Spirit, on the one hand and the incumbent Jathedar as an individual and his individual acts and utterances, should be well recognized. In view of controversial roles of the Takht Jathedars, time has come to deliberate upon the domain of the Akal Takht and the *modus operandi* of issuing Hukamnamas in the light of the doctrine and the historical tradition and the imperatives of the times.

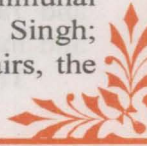


EVOLUTION OF SIKH POLITY

(SOME FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES CONCERNING MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH'S POLITY)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh endeavoured to usher in an open, pluralistic society characterised by the values of "secularism", justice, liberty and equality. This was a new revolutionary humanistic ethos in the medieval age that otherwise was marked by religious bigotry, communal exclusiveness, sectarian inwardness and compartmentalised value-system. In contrast to the earlier internecine warfare on religio-communal plane, the Maharaja brought in an atmosphere of peaceful co-existence of all faiths ensuring for all the fundamental right to freedom of conscience.

What is more important than the guarantee of religious freedom on the individual level is the fact that the Maharaja on the institutional level, diverging from the medieval-age theocratic thought-patterns and praxis, effected secularization of state power and its forms by positively drawing a distinguishing line between the temporal power and the theo-ecclesiastical authority. That is why he did not declare Sikhism as the state religion, nor sought to follow a theocratic system. No proselytism was permitted through state power directly or indirectly. The Lahore Darbar presented a non-sectarian picture with key portfolios being given on considerations other than those of religio-communal nature. His Prime Minister was Dogra Dhian Singh; Faqir Aziz-ud-Din was in charge of External Affairs, the



Home Department was handled by Faqir Nur-ud-Din, while Finance was taken care of by Hindu experts such as Diwan Bhawani Dass, Ganga Ram, etc. To give a concrete, determinate shape to the principal of religious freedom, the Maharaja gave to his Muslim subjects the rights of their public and private law in the administration of justice, for which the courts of *qazis* and *muftis* were retained and recognized. The same spirit is exhibited by his tax system which did not admit of any discrimination like the one that informed the imposition of *jazia*.

The liberal, tolerant and secular policy of the Maharaja was due primarily to the influence of the pluralistic pattern of state and society as envisaged in Sikhism which heralded a new universalistic value-pattern in its world historical mission. In analysing the Maharaja's regime, an attempt is sometimes made in certain circles to contradistinguish the Sikh religious tradition from the Punjabi tradition. The premises of this view point are that the first tradition is of communal character and implies a theocratic polity, while the second one is of liberal, secular character, and further that due to this difference the two forces are mutually exclusive. From this angle, it is contended that the liberal, secular policies of the Maharaja implied his switch-over from the sectarian Sikh tradition to the transcendent Punjabi tradition. This line of argument then leads to the contention that Ranjit Singh with a view to broaden the socio-political basis of his regime, drew upon and encouraged Punjabi nationalism as a substitute for the Sikh communitarian consciousness. The weakness of this argument is apparent from the fact that after the death of the Maharaja, the forces of Punjabi nationalism were nowhere seen asserting themselves and rallying behind the Raj against external onslaught and internal sabotage.

The premises of this argument referred to above are

neither logically nor historically tenable and betray lack of comprehension of the ideational character of the Sikh revolution and the historical forms of its expression and instrumentation in the context of which alone can we understand the dynamics of the Maharaja's policies and practices aimed at Punjabiāt as a creative synthesis of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh elements.

As rightly observed by Arnold Toynbee, Sikhism emerged as a higher religion destined to serve as a chrysalis for the birth of a new social and statal pattern; it possessed historical potential for a new civilization in the Indian sub-continent qualitatively different from the earlier civilizations. Seen in the process, Punjabiāt arose in a new form as one of the historical instruments for realising the new civilization promised by the Sikh movement. In other words Sikhism as the ideological expression of the nascent and nebulous historical forces of the emerging era arose as a revolutionary surge for a new pattern of society partaking of the post-feudal value-pattern. For this purpose, Sikhism carved out for its revolutionary praxis a new ideational basis-different from that of the reformist Bhakti movement-by evolving a new spiritualist-materialist mode of thought in place of the old spiritualist-idealist tradition. This new thought-pattern invests the world of time and space not only with existential being but also with law (*hukam*) operating from within, thereby making the material reality work in an autonomous, de-centralised way. This concept is the metaphysical basis for a new pluralistic society envisioned in Sikhism as against the old pattern of society uni-centred, for its being as well as sustenance, on an over-centralised Divine Authority which alone was real, the rest being all *maya* or *lila*.

The Sikh concept of pluralistic society is essentially of a multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-racial society, termed as *halemi raj* by Guru Arjun. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's liberalism and secularism

flowed out of the pluralistic Sikh tradition itself. That is why Ranjit Singh, on the occasion of his coronation as the Maharaja of Lahore on 12 April, 1801, issued the Nanak-shahi coin with the inscription that attributed the bestowal of victory and power to the grace of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh : *Degh-o-Tegh-o-Fateh-Nusrat be-drang/Yaft as Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*.

In fact in the case of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the term "secularism" is not sufficient in that it has narrow connotations and implies religious insularity and aloofness which was not the characteristic of the Maharaja's policy. His praxis can be better described in terms of pluralism rather than "secularism"—the former includes the latter.

On the political level, the pluralistic Sikh tradition implies democratic, republican polity. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's secular state as such was a step towards realising a non-theocratic polity envisaged in Sikhism. That he describe his Raj as *Sarkar Khalsa Ji* refers not to his theocratic propensity but to his desire to evolve a representative polity. But his success in this direction was only partial. It is intriguing to find that contrary to the democratic, republican polity envisioned in the Sikh doctrine and realised nebulously during the Misl period, Maharaja Ranjit Singh ultimately set up a monarchy on feudal lines while ascending to political power on the crest of the anti-feudal Sikh movement. This self-contradiction of the Maharaja is due to the half-realised potential of the Sikh revolution which on the ideological level contained seeds of a new civilization but which on the material plane, when it attained political power in the eighteenth century, could not create or even encourage objective conditions for a post-feudal mode of production on economic level and the corresponding super-structure on socio-political level.

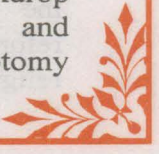
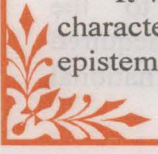


SECULARISM AND RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

Differentiation of the secular from the religious domain is an irreversible characteristic of modern civilization. Even those communities that take recourse to the concept of unity of religion and politics to serve as plank for their claim to being simultaneously both religious and political corporate entities require a secular dispensation for the flowering of their self-identities in a multi-religious, multi-ethnic society like that of India. Further such communities with dual character—religious and political—have to come to terms with the imperatives of secularism, even when they succeed in carving out for themselves separate states on religio-political basis—such being the nature of modern polity, which for its success has to transcend the denominational contradictions inherent in the mix-up of religion and politics.

Out of the 'modern' philosophies and ideologies since the sixteenth century grew a general view that man's life, his realm of reality, derived its sense and significance, value and validity, sanctity and legitimacy not from any outside or transcendental source but from within the this-worldly reality, from within the manifold of phenomena, from within the concrete existence of man.

It was in this philosophical and ideological backdrop characterized by ontological (mind/matter) and epistemological (subject/object) dualism and dichotomy



that the processes of secularization in the West differentiated the secular domain of man's this-worldly activities-social, cultural, economic, political and even ethical-from the religious domain which at best was treated as a realm in which man could, if he so desired, have an 'affair' with God to be experienced, like sex, in the privacy of one's individual life ! As is obvious from the above, the Western differentiation of the secular from the religious, or in other words, Western secularism, is based on the dualism, divorce or dichotomy of the two domains.

This Western model of secularism has been sought to be adopted in the Indian context with some adaptations such as equidistance of the secular state from all religions; acceptance by the secular state of co-existence of different religions, and constitutional rights not only for practising religion in one's own private life but also for its propagation, which, *ipso facto*, means propagation in public life as well. The point is that the modified adoption of the Western model of secularism in our national body-politic has certain unresolved inherent contradictions. As such we have to look at the problem from a different perspective, that is, from distinctive Indian perspective, to evolve an alternative viable model of secularism in consonance with archetypal Indian ethos. Some points need to be noted in this context. First, the philosophical and ideological trends, emanating from or leading to the dichotomy between material and non-material reality, that in the West had paved the way for secularization of polity and national life, did not take place in India; no cut-off process ever started here. On the other hand, our renaissance movements that arose in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, being correlative to the reformation movements, had on the way acquired religious-revivalist undertones. *Swarajya* (national

independence) was explained in terms of *Ramrajya* (equitable dispensation as envisioned by Hindu *avtar*, Lord Ram) to arouse the masses for the national freedom struggle. This brings us to the second point. In India, religion has been mediated through culture into archetypal Indian consciousness with the result that religious beliefs, cultural traditions and ritual practices have become inextricably intertwined. Thirdly, religion in the sense of *dharma*, embracing all of man's activities—*kama*, *artha*, *moksha*—has taken deep roots as a social phenomenon admitting of no 'privatization'.

All this would not mean that differentiation of the secular from the religious in Indian polity and national life is not conceptionally and empirically possible. The point, rather, is that in the Indian situation, the requisite differentiation—to be effective and abiding—would have to be built afresh not on the basis of dichotomy of the two domains, as in the Western model, but on the postulate of mutual compatibility and relative autonomy of the religious and the secular sphere. It was this kind of revolutionary secularizing role that was played by Sikhism, during the Guru period, both on conceptual and institutional levels.

The ideological underpinnings of the medieval-age theocracy and overlapping of religion and polity were undermined by Sikhism through certain metaphysical concepts informed by a new mode of cognition that appeared for the first time in Indian speculative thought. For Sikhism, the world of time and space, that is, material reality, being creation of God, is as real as the divine reality itself (*Aap sat keeya sab sat*). This worldly reality is, as such, no more seen as illusory appearance or shadow-reflection of the Absolute. Further, Sikh thought envisages that though material reality partakes of the essence of divine reality, yet the worldly reality is a creation distinct from the Creator.

(*Duee kudrat sajeve*). The world has also been made self-active, and self-developing by the Creator Who imparted to the created reality, the principles of motion and activity, once for all, making it autonomous as such. The processes of becoming—origination and development, enduring and disintegration—are seen as inherent in matter as envisioned by Guru Nanak in his *Japji* (*Eka maaee.....*). The phenomenal world as such is no more in need of moment-to-moment dependence on the Absolute in the sense in which reflection is dependent upon the reflecting object, as contended by certain pre-Nanakian schools of Indian thought. The Christian notion of continual creation, continual sustenance and continual destruction, also makes the world continually dependent upon God in the sense in which continual inflow of electricity is necessary to keep the bulb aglow. Islamic thought also provides for continual dependence of the world on God in that, though externally the things are the creatures of God, internally these are the ideas subsisting in the Mind of God as the Absolute Knower; the created things being the ideas, their continued existence depends upon the continual act of knowing by the Knower. On the other hand, Sikh metaphysics envisages the phenomenal world of man as relatively distinct and autonomous, being self-active and self-developing. The spiritual and the material domain of reality stand in relationship of mutual compatibility (partaking of the same essence) and relative autonomy. In other words, the relationship is of the nature of unity-in-differentiation.

This metaphysical concept of unity-in-differentiation is, in Sikh praxis, the basis of the differentiation of the religious and the secular domain on institutional level. In Christianity there has been the practice of two swords donned by the Pope who claimed to be the matrix of both spiritual and temporal

authorities. In Sikhism Guru Hargobind wore the two swords of *miri* (temporal authority) and *piri* (spiritual power); but this has been the prerogative of only the Guru person. Wearing of one and not two swords by a Sikh, after baptism, means that in Sikhism there is no institution comparable to Christian Pope or Muslim Caliph who claimed to be the centre of both spiritual and temporal powers and wielder of both the authorities. In other words, there is no fusion or merger of the secular and the religious power in a single person or in a single institution. That is why Guru Hargobind erected Sri Akal Takht (symbolizing temporal authority) distinctly outside of the precincts of Sri Harmandir Sahib (symbolizing spiritual power). That the two seats of spiritual and temporal powers have been kept apart both institutionally and physically reveals the real nature of the concept of *miri-piri* (religion-politics nexus) which is of the nature of unity-in-differentiation in which there is no fusion of the two domains or subordination of the one to the other; this ensures the relative autonomy of the secular sphere in which secular matters are to be tackled in secular ways. Guru Gobind Singh makes the distinction of the two domains categorically clear in his *Bachittar Natak* :

The House of Baba (Nanak)
And the House of Babur (worldly ruler)
Both are creations of God :
One reigns in the spiritual domain
and the other in secular affairs.

The upshot of the above exposition is that in consonance with the Indian conditions, a new praxis of secularism, that is, of the differentiation of the religious from the secular, on the postulate of the mutual compatibility and relative autonomy of the two domains, in both possible and essential.

Indiscriminate mix-up of religion and politics in

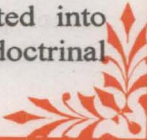
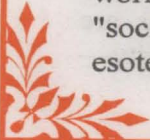
different ways is one of the factors involved in the emergence of the phenomena of religious fundamentalism, the root-cause of which, of course, is the growing contradiction between unitarianism and pluralism, on religious, cultural, social and political levels. Face to face with this contradiction, some elements among the minorities are trying to politicize their ethnicities, that is, their ethno-cultural, ethno-religious, and ethno-social identities in 'fundamentalist tones. On the other hand, some sections among the majority community are struggling to ethnicize the national polity; composite Indian nationalism is sought to be homogenized in a particular ethno-religious form. Consequently, our secularism (which in the Nehruite conception was pluralistic in character) is under strains from religious fundamentalism of the majority as well as of the minority communities. The majoritarian religious fundamentalism is destructive but the minoritarian religious fundamentalism is both destructive and self-destructive. The minorities face two dangers. First, their own religious fundamentalism would make their identities self-limiting and rigid at the cost of their self-expanding liberalism, exposing them to self-inflicted atrophy. Secondly, they would be facing the mightier challenge of religious fundamentalism from the other side. So the minorities have greater stakes in secularism and religious pluralism.

Secularism in India to-day is at the crossroads where for its survival and sustenance it requires two essential pillars of religious and political pluralism. Religious pluralism is insufficient without political pluralism; the two have to act as complementary to each other for ensuring a strong liberal, secular polity and composite national life.



SIKHISM AND SOCIAL REALITY IN INDIA TODAY

Sikhism, the youngest of the world religions, emerged as a revolutionary Prophetic religion over 500 years ago. It was conceived and shaped by ten Gurus—Guru Nanak being the first and Guru Gobind Singh being the last Prophet of Sikh religion. This religion which sometimes is erroneously interpreted as a reformed phase of Hinduism or a blend of Hinduism and Islam, is essentially a new "revealed" faith that had the potential of ushering in a new world civilization in the Indian sub-continent. Sikhism played a great historical role, leading a mighty crusade against religious discrimination, social differentiation, economic exploitation and political victimization that characterized social realities in medieval India. With its progressive value pattern, Sikhism brought India onto the threshold of the modern age. Investing sociological significance to its theological concept of the Oneness of God, this religion played significant unifying role in Indian society which stood, then, polarized and fragmented into self-centred, narrow, sectarian boundaries. Sikhism is not an inward looking faith for salvation of soul. Being a Prophetic missionary religion (but without any tendency towards proselytization) Sikhism envisages this-worldly concerns of society and state as much as the other-worldly concerns of soul. In fact Guru Nanak had "socialized" religion which then had degenerated into esoteric practices and empty ritualism. The doctrinal



concerns of Sikhism with society and state, as much as with soul, have determined the nature and evolutionary course of the Sikh faith and the Sikh community. Sikhism right from the very beginning was envisioned as an institutional religion with its own institutions and structures as the instruments of its historic mission on earth. Correspondingly, the Sikh dispensation grew and developed not only as a religious group but also as a political community. This evolution of the Sikhs from a religious group into a full-fledged political peoplehood was institutionalised by Guru Gobind Singh through the baptismal ceremony of *amrit* (nectar) in the year 1699 A. D. With this sacrament the tenth Prophet gave to his followers not only the *individual* identity expressed by the five external symbols known as the five *kakkars* (uncut hair; comb; steel bracelet; underwear and steel-dagger), but also the corporate identity of ethno-religious, ethno-social and ethno-political nature.

It is only in recent years that Sikhism has become fully self-conscious about its identity in all its dimensions—both individual and collective. This identity-consciousness is a positive phenomenon and must not be confused with religious sectarianism or exclusivism; exclusivism in all its forms is alien to the spirit of Sikh liberalism and universalism. The Sikhs—being 2% of Indian population—constitute numerically one of the smallest minorities of India, though their role in the struggle for the country's independence as well as their contribution in the making of the new India is much more than what would be expected of a numerically small group. According to the 1981 Census the Sikh population in India was thirteen million—the total Indian population then being 665 million of which the Hindus accounted for 540 million. About ten million Sikhs are in Punjab while three millions are settled in other parts of the country. Over two million Sikhs are residing abroad. Having been always a small minority—

even when the Sikhs had acquired political power in the 18th century and established a sovereign state—they have remained concerned about assimilative dangers to their identity, to their very being as a distinctive group. The growth of self-consciousness on the part of contemporary Sikhism and Sikh society in recent years has made the Sikhs all the more aware of the existential concerns of their *being* as a distinctive ethno-religious and ethno-political group. On the other hand, like other ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious minorities, the Sikhs are worried about the emerging trends towards unitarian nationalism and social homogenization. The growing contradictions between the present-day unitarian trends and the original pluralistic orientation of our national polity are inevitably impinging upon the existential concerns of the minorities.

For the last 150 years or so, we had cherished the belief that it was class contradictions that constituted the dialectics of social reality, and that economic determinants would resolve class contradictions. It had further been, all along, contended that with the resolution of class contradictions the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and regional problems of the minorities would also inevitably get dissolved. This belief was based on the postulate that the problems of the minorities were essentially of economic nature and were accentuated by class contradictions inherent in the society, and further that the "contents" of the movements and struggle of the minorities were basically "economic", while their outward expression took on the ethnic, cultural, religious "forms". Hence the root cause was attributed to the economic factor alone. But the ethnic experience of the developed Western countries show that this is not wholly true. The economic factor is important but the identity consciousness of the minorities and their urges and aspirations for corporate self-expression transcend the economic factor as was

evidenced by the case of the Armenians in the erstwhile Soviet Union. It is a question of their moorings in their heritage, their autonomous being, which the minorities seek to preserve and give expression to in appropriate forms which would, *inter-alia*, enable them to participate in the national body-politic of their countries in their corporate distinct capacities *qua* ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. It appears that now when we are on the threshold of the 21st century, ethnic contradictions would more and more come to the foreground in place of, or side by side with, class contradictions. To quote just a few instances: Spain is faced with Basques' demand for autonomy. The French-speaking Swiss of Berne are struggling to distinguish themselves from their German-speaking compatriots. Wallens and Flems are poised against each other in Belgium. The Kurds are agitated about their distinctive existence in Iran. The Tamils of Sri Lanka took the path of struggle for a separate *eelam*. France and Italy had to go in for regional decentralization to satisfy the aspirations of their respective ethnic groups—Bretons and Corsicans in France and Sicillians and South Treleans in Italy. Further, Ethiopia, Malaysia, Thailand, Pakistan, erstwhile, U. S. S. R. and even the U. S. A. have similarly been facing problems of ethno-nationalism. In India, the Sikhs are seeking preservation of their ethno-social, ethno-religious and ethno-political identity through regional autonomy in federalised national polity while striving for corporate integration with the national body politic of India of which the Sikh people are an inseparate part. The Muslims in India are also concerned about their religious, cultural and social identity.

Another myth stands exploded. At one time it was believed that the forces of modernization-industrialization, urbanization, professional mobility, etc.-would in the long run result in a kind of social homogeneity liquifying the linguistic, religious, ethnic and cultural distinctiveness

of different sections of society. But the processes of modernization have, rather, accentuated self-awareness of the minorities about their distinctive beings. Thus the stress now is—and should be—on *harmony* among self-conscious ethnic groups, rather than on their *homogenization*. This calls for new pattern of polity.

The existing patterns of polity—both capitalist and communist—are under severe stresses and strains caused by the impact of modern technology which necessitates fundamental change in structural and superstructural forms of society; these stresses and strains on the existing political systems, in their own way, tend to compound the minority problems.

Social scientists all over the world—in the capitalist as well as the non-capitalist systems—are veering round to the view that a pluralistic pattern of society with federalized polity alone is capable of resolving the built-in religious-ethnic tensions and conflicts of the twentieth century society, which when allowed to go unattended result in extremism and fundamentalism of different colours and contours. The minority consciousness, or the quest of a minority for preserving and strengthening its self-identity, is not in itself an extremist-fundamentalist disposition of mind; it is not separatist in character.

The whole perspective gets distorted when the problem is seen from a unitarian angle, discarding the pluralistic approach. Secondly, the nation-state with its ideology of totalitarian nationalism—as it arose in the West and later on was transplanted in the developing countries of the East—is regarded as the highest possible and ultimate political structure of eternal nature. It is forgotten that the nation-state—as much as, say, the Greek city-state—is only a historically-determined political structure that arose in the phase of capitalist development of society in the West. Certain historical specifics invested the nation-state, in its earlier

evolutionary course, with a unitarian-totalitarian orientation. This totalitarianism claims total, absolute allegiance of the individual to the nation-state to the exclusion of his all other allegiances to ethnicity, religion, etc. Secondly, here the individual, rather, than the group, is taken as the unit of political community that is sought to be built on a homogenized social base. Thus the stress is on the individual's assimilation into the national body-politic, rather than on the corporate integration of the groups *qua* distinctive entities. In this totalitarian nationalism there is little room for the institutions and structures of the minorities. This totalitarian nationalism is complemented by unitarian polity. This is how the monolithic polity comes to be identified with the nation and the nation is taken as a homogenized society. Diversity is, then, tried to be reduced into unity which is taken as conformity. Assimilation is aimed at in the name of integration. Any group-linguistic, religious, cultural, ethnic-that resists such homogenization is dubbed as fundamentalist; corporate interest-articulation by a minority is pronounced as communalism. Resistance to identification of the monolithic polity with the nation is condemned as secessionism. It is this kind of unitarian-totalitarian state that Dr. S. Radhakrishnan-one of the greatest thinkers of the present century-condemns as the God-State in his well-known work : *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. The worship of the God-State is, then, called patriotism in secular idiom.

The nature of the nation-state to be evolved in free India was one of the major concerns of the Founding Fathers of Indian Constitution. Fully realizing the fact of linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic and regional diversities, they succeeded in striking a balance between unitarian and pluralistic polity in the Constitution, which in its Articles 25, 26, 29 and 30 implicitly accepts the corporate identities of the minorities. Secularism was

conceived of as a very potent instrument of pluralism. Secularism which in the Nehruite conception meant religious pluralism is now taking on a new unitarian complexion and is being misinterpreted and exploited by certain elements as an instrument of homogenization in its own subtle, indirect way. The *miri-piri* concept of Sikhism which is an integral, inseparable part of the doctrine—is being condemned by its opponents as an anti-secular idea of feudalistic theocracy of the past and hence outdated in the present-day context. This is nothing but misconception or misinterpretation of this concept which is rooted in the Sikh doctrine and embodied in the Sikh history: even in certain Sikh circles there is confusion about this matter.

In Sikhism the relationship between religion and politics, between religious authority and secular polity, cannot be cognized in simplistic terms of the unity/separation dichotomy. The relation between the religious and the secular polity is analogous to that between soul and body: soul without body is an abstraction while body without soul is only dead matter. In other words, the equation between *miri* and *piri*, between worldly state and transcendental state, between temporal authority and spiritual sovereignty, between secular power and religious polity, is of the nature of correlation. The two dispensations have unity in the sense of correlation but no coalescence, fusion, mix-up or merger : these are separate in the sense of being distinct and relatively autonomous, but without being absolutely independent of each other as dissociated entities. Says Guru Gobind Singh in *Bachittar Natak* :

The House of Baba (Nanak)

And the House of Babur (worldly ruler)

Both are creations of God

One reigns in the spiritual domain

and the other in secular affairs

This means that the religious and the secular polity and their respective institutions and organisations are

divine creations—that is, of *a priori* nature in philosophical language and are not man-made contingent structures rooted in social contract.

But in the very next line, Guru Gobind Singh adds that in the event of clash, the call of conscience, should take precedence over the dictates of worldly considerations. Similar views are expressed by S. Radhakrishnan. "The State is not above ethics.... The worship of the God-State with which we are familiar today, that the State is the creator of right and wrong, that reasons of State justify any crime, that ethics are a purely individual matter, are flatly opposed to the Hindi view". This is the Sikh view as well. The religious and the secular institutions, both being divine creations serve historical necessity. One is concerned with human and social values which, though relativistic, are of transcendental nature in that they are not rooted in expediency. The other domain is concerned with secular laws the source of which is the collective will of the people. The secular laws would be progressive to the extent to which they approximate to human and social values. This is how the correlation of the secular and the spiritual operates at existential levels. So, in the ultimate reckoning the relationship between religion and politics takes the form of nexus between 'values' and 'laws'. This is the essence of the *miri-piri* conception in Sikhism, proper understanding of which is possible only in its doctrinal and historical perspective.

The loss of political power in the medieval age suffered by the Hindus in the world here and now was sought to be compensated by the Bhakti movement in the world hereafter. Dharma accordingly had become an abstract quest of the individual soul for salvation in the next world; this world was left at the mercy of the exploitative feudal system in which the ruler claimed divine right to rule without any accountability towards the ruled. In this situation, Guru Nanak 'socialized' religion into a mighty revolutionary force for collective

amelioration of society and state. Sikh religion, as such, is doctrinally concerned as much with soul's relation to God (*palt*) as with man's relation with society and state (*halt*). The spiritual concerns of soul and the temporal concerns of man, both, are taken care of in Sikhism.

The significance of this concept becomes clear when seen in the context of the relationship between religion and politics as envisaged in other religions. The orthodox Islamic polity was theocratic with the Caliph commanding and demanding allegiance of the state to the Caliphate. In classical Hindu polity, the religious, ecclesiastical sovereignty operated indirectly through the Brahmin priestly caste that put the seal of worldly authority on the king. In Christianity (the Roman Catholic) the state was subordinate to the church, as the Pope claimed to be the wielder of both the religious and the temporal sovereignty. In Christianity there has been the practice of two swords donned by the Pope, one sword represented spiritual authority and the other, stood for political authority over the state. In Sikhism, the correlation between the two authorities, both doctrinally and empirically, is of a different kind. Guru Hargobind wore the two swords of *miri* and *piri*, but this has been the prerogative of only the Guru-Person who as the Divine medium partook of the spiritual and the temporal sovereignty of God on earth in history. For the first time in the annals of world civilization Sikh religion introduced a qualitatively new and unique concept of the Divine Spirit becoming determinate in history, in historical time, through the Guru-medium. Spiritual sovereignty of God (*piri*) was bestowed by Guru Gobind Singh on the Adi Granth (the Word) which became as such Guru Granth, while temporal sovereignty (*miri*) was vested in peoplehood with the Panth as its concrete sociological determination; the Panth became Guru Panth, Khalsa Panth, and was institutionalised as such through the baptismal amrit on the Baisakhi day of the year 1699 at Sri Anandpur Sahib,

as mentioned earlier. In other words through this sacrament the ethno-religious evolution of the Sikhs got institutionalized into a corporate identity of ethno-political character.

Sri Akal Takht is the *symbol* of *miri* vesting in the *Guru Panth*, just as Sri Harimandir Sahib is the symbol of spiritual sovereignty embodied by *Sri Guru Granth*. Further, the wearing of one, and not two swords, by a Sikh after baptismal ceremony, means that in Sikh religion there is no institution comparable to Christian Pope or Muslim Caliph who claimed to be the centre of both spiritual and temporal authorities and the wielder of both secular and religious power. This is one of the implications of the Guruship coming to an end in bodily form, after Guru Gobind Singh who is immanent not in any single individual (who could claim regency of God on earth), but in the collectivity of Khalsa Panth. The two divinely-ordained institutions of Sikhism—Sri Guru Granth, Guru Panth—flow out of the *miri-piri* concept which if properly understood and practised would enable mankind to realise, genuinely, the modern values of liberalism, secularism and universalism.

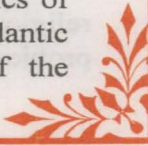
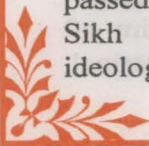
A new ideological phenomenon is emerging in India today. There is a growing tendency on the part of some elements in the majority community to ethnicize the national polity; the minorities, in reaction, tend to politicise, in militant tones, their respective ethno-social and ethno-religious identities. The resultant dialectic of the two processes characterizes contemporary social reality. The attendant contradictions can be best resolved by strengthening the dynamics of pluralism and secularism. In this situation the Sikh value-pattern can radiate hope for India—and for mankind in general—provided the Sikh community rediscovers, afresh, the essential liberal and pluralistic spirit of Sikhism and in that light boldly faces the ideological aspects of contemporary social praxis in India today.



SIKHISM AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The Sikh tradition of inter-religious dialogue originated with Guru Nanak himself, the first Prophet of Sikh religion, who during his journeys (*Udasis*) in the Indian sub-continent and beyond discoursed with his contemporary saints and sufis, scholastic exponents and practitioners of other faiths. The essence of his discourse with the *Siddhas* (Nath Yogis) at Achal-Vatala in the Punjab (or at the Sumer-Kailash-mountain, according to *Puratan Janam Sakhi*) is expressed in his well-known composition, *Sidhgoshti*. While the Yogis attempted to convert the Guru into their folds through theological debate as well as by display of their supernatural, occult powers, the founder of Sikhism exhorted them to be true Yogis by realizing and practising the true spirit of their faith. Guru Nanak made similar exhortations to the followers of other faiths in his endeavour to make them re-discover the internal significance of their beliefs and rituals, without discarding their chosen paths. This is how Guru Nanak envisaged a pluralist conception of inter-faith dialogue as one of the means to dissolve the rigidities of religious exclusiveness and the concomitant religious antagonism and to bring about inter-religious understanding and inter-community accommodation, unity and harmony.

The Sikh tradition of inter-religious dialogue has passed through many phases. The Nirmala scholastics of Sikh religion indulged in debates with Vedantic ideologists. But as the expository arguments of the



Nirmala scholastics were carried within the Vedantic problematic, their exegesis of the fundamental concepts and terms of Sikh religion resulted in a Vedanticized version of the Sikh doctrine that eclipsed the Sikh tradition and diluted the distinctive Sikh identity. The reformative movements within the Sikh society from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards reveal a common refrain : the quest for rediscovering and restoring the essential Sikh identity on different levels. This search started with the theological and social levels and then moved on to the doctrinal and political levels. Owing to a variety of reasons and factors—including the encounter with modernism, which paradoxically has made religious, linguistic and ethnic communities all the more conscious of their group-identities and corporate personalities—Sikhism has, in the recent years, become self-conscious for the first time in its history after the Guru-period. In understanding contemporary Sikh praxis—notwithstanding zigzags—it is important to note the growing self-consciousness of Sikhism about its doctrinal sovereignty, that is, its revelational originality and philosophical newness and integrity.

Secondly, contemporary Sikhism is becoming intensely aware of its ethno-religious, ethno-social, ethno-cultural and ethno-political identity and corporate personality. This two-fold self-consciousness has introduced a new problematic in modern Sikh consciousness that is conditioning, in its own way, contemporary Sikh praxis; the ambivalences and aberrations present in the Sikh praxis today are also due to the fact that the growing self-consciousness is still at a nebulous stage and its intimations intuitively felt by the activists of the Sikh praxis are still to be clearly conceptualized in the context of contemporary reality.

The point is that the participation of Sikhism in inter-religious dialogue will, now, be from the standpoint of problematic of its self-consciousness about its doctrinal

and corporate identity.

The identity-consciousness means, in a sense, self-differentiation but not contra-differentiation from other religious traditions and other religious communities. In fact this self-differentiation has simultaneously made the question of Sikhism's relationship with other religious traditions a priority item on the agenda of inter-religious dialogue and has imparted to this issue a new urgency that was not so acute earlier.

Specifically, Sikhism, alongside of its self-consciousness which involves self-differentiation, has to re-define its *relatedness* to Hinduism, as distinct from the earlier stress on *rootedness* in Hinduism. Sikh religion, despite its doctrinal newness and distinctiveness, shares with the Indian commonwealth of religions certain recurring ideational archetypes¹ that have shaped different

1. These fundamental archetypal ideas distinguish Indian thought from Western speculation. Western philosophy is based on Greek thought that believed in multiplicity of universal ideas behind multiplicity of corresponding particular phenomena. For Indian thought the variety of cosmos is grounded in an underlying unity termed as Brahman. Sikh religion, sharing this basic postulate, derived from it the universality of human spirit. Correlative to this basic idea of unity of cosmos is another postulate that there is *a priori* harmony at the heart of ultimate reality. On the other hand, Western thought holds that there is contradiction inherent in the womb of ultimate reality which through the oppositional process strives to realize a synthesis of the opposites. Brahman is not only *sat*, *chit* but also *anand* which is a state of harmony, calmness, equilibrium, equipoise. The third pre-supposition of Indian thought is *a priori* unity of self and non-self, of mind and matter. Western thought based on dualism is still struggling hard to integrate the two realms of mind and matter into some non-dualistic order or principle of reality. In the Indian context *atman* is taken as a part, a form or a spark of the Absolute (Brahman). In Sikhism this unity is of the nature of *essence*, and not of *substance*. Further, Sikh thought believes that material reality in time and space, being creation of God, is equally real and not *mithya* or illusion. The world of phenomena, as such, is real, though not permanent and eternal. Here comes in a new problematic introduced by Sikh philosophy for the first time in the

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cultures and civilizations arising in the Indian sub-continent. These common ideational archetypes are distinguishable from those of the Western thought in its generality. In any meaningful and productive inter-religious dialogue, these similarities and dissimilarities not only among various religious traditions but also in the realm of recurring ideational archetypes that constitute the background of different religious traditions, should receive adequate attention.

Contemporary trends of inter-religious dialogue reveal its new character, basis and objectives.

One of the old conceptions was based on the reductionist approach that sought the so-called common denominators (as distinct from recurring archetypal ideas) between different religions; inter-religious harmony and unity was attempted to be erected on such presumed common denominators. This approach suffers from certain epistemological flaws. The logical basis of reductive methodology is the notion of logical symmetry of systems, contemporaneous in a single, all-embracing

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history of Indian speculative thought. The general Vedantic concept is that the real is eternal and the eternal real. *Sat* is real and eternal in this sense. The world of phenomena, being not eternal, is not real (*sat*). On the other hand, in Sikh philosophy the world of time and space is real, though not eternal—the implication being that eternality or eternity is not the sole qualifying characteristic of reality. Thus the connotation of the term *sat* in Sikh religion becomes radically different from that of Vedantic thought. Another implication follows from here. The concept of eternity as synonymous with reality involves a spatial, isotropic, cyclical view of time, as against the conception of historical, anisotropic view of time envisaged in Sikh thought. This is indicated by the Nanakian terms of *aad jugad* in his *Japji*. The Vedantic mode of equating reality with eternity provided for static equilibrium and stability on social level, but at the cost of change and development. The real as eternal means the self-same state of being in all times. The Sikh view of the world of phenomena being real, though not eternal, not only introduced a new conception of *dharma* but also made change as a normative principle of society seen as a developing organism. Herein lies the revolutionary role of Sikhism in Indian praxis.

frame of reference wherein the systems turn out to be reversible and reducible to one another, revealing essential unity (common denominators) in apparent diversity. For Hinduism, Vedantic thought in its generality constitutes such a frame of reference for all the thought-systems of India.

Such common denominators in actuality turn out to be nothing more than abstractions, with apparent universality but with no determinate content. On the basis of such presumed commonness between different religions the majority religions tend to assimilate and appropriate into themselves the minority religions. This is how Sikh religion has been treated as a species of the Vedantic genus by stretching the connotations of the *Mul Mantra* terms—*Ik Omkar, Satnam Akal Murat*, etc.—back to one or the other system of Upanishad thought. These terms, showing apparent commonness with those of the earlier Vedantic schools, were not seen in their integrality in the perspective of the new problematic introduced by Guru Nanak in the evolutionary course of spiritual consciousness of mankind.

The old reductionist conception of inter-religious relationship was anti-historicist. Each religion has a universal and a historical dimension. The specifics of the time and place in which a religion arises and develops leave their imprint on the beliefs, rituals and customs of that religion. The historical dimension also contributes towards the evolution of the religious tradition—a process without which the tradition ends up as a static system inhibiting freedom of the human spirit by tethering it to an obsolete dogma. Historical variables—language, script, racial milieu, cultural ethos, social strata, economic modes, territorial factors, etc., enter into the process of evolution of religious traditions and become integral components of the self-identities of these traditions. However there has been a tendency on the part of some scholars to see the incorporation of historical variables

into religious traditions as their exogenous growth and not endogenous development; the externally acquired contingent characteristics and the characteristics that are, or have become internal, integral parts of the tradition should be distinguished. Where historical variables enter into the mediational process in and through which the universal becomes a historical determination, the characteristics of the religious tradition so acquired become its constituent aspects and integral components of its self-identity.

This point is immensely relevant in the context of certain trends of Sikh studies by Western scholars who in their interpretation of the evolution of Sikhism from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh treat it as a "transformation" due to certain external contingent factors and so distinguish the original Nanakian identity of Sikh tradition from the subsequent "transformed" identity. In other words they treat this process as exogenous and not of endogenous nature. The point is not to minimize the role of external, historical variables; the point, rather, is that some of these historical variables, entering into the mediational process in and through which the universal in Sikh religion has evolved into a particular historical determination, have become integral parts of the Sikh tradition and constituent aspects of the Sikh identity the emergence of which has been of the nature of continuity-in-change. In any understanding of Sikhism and its development this nature of its evolutionary process has to be kept in view.

The pluralist-historicist conception of inter-religious dialogue postulates that different religions represent different stages of the evolution of spiritual consciousness of mankind—a viewpoint which may not be easily acceptable to certain religions that hitherto have been claiming that they express the full and final revelation of the Absolute. Implicit in this claim is not only religious exclusivism betraying an aura of superiority, but also a

pre-supposition that spiritual consciousness of mankind is static and does not ascend to higher stages of speculative thought.

The pluralist-historicist approach is antithetical to the reductionist approach that was a product of the unitarian-totalitarian mode of thought, both on secular and religious levels; this mode of thought has lost much of its validity and acceptability.

The notion of over-centralized monolithic unitarian polity, sought to be erected on (real or attempted) homogenized social base, stands collapsed today. The same fate has overtaken religious unitarianism which claimed that full and final revelation (of the Absolute and of the sole path to it) has already been given to certain "chosen" people who, so enlightened about the Divine Will, are ordained to strive to realise it on earth as transcendent necessity and historical inevitability; the missionary zeal so generated was not prepared to concede any legitimacy to the beliefs and practices of "other peoples". Semitic religions tended towards this kind of unitarianism on the basis of their claim to full and final revelation. Traditional Indian religions gravitate towards religious unitarianism on the postulate that the Absolute is the undifferentiated, indeterminate One and that the manifold phenomena are either illusory or have only secondary reality and can and do roll back into the primordial One. Religious unitarianism complements the trends of social homogenization and political totalitarianism.

Contemporary reality is characterized by the dialectic of unitarianism and pluralism; this dialectic has given birth to fundamentalism which has become a global phenomenon today. Three stands in different combinations are seen in the fabric of religious fundamentalism in India. The first strand is the growth of self-consciousness on the part of a community about its ethno-cultural, ethno-religious and ethno-political identity,

and the consequent striving to preserve its autonomous existence which, when repressed, takes on a fundamentalist orientation. Secondly, there is the homogenizing tendency among certain elements in the majority community, rightly or wrongly, seen as absorbant. Thirdly, the phenomenon may arise out of the inability, due to historical circumstances, of a group in coping with the imperatives of the existing situation and, as a consequence, its falling back on its real or imagined religio-historical past, seen invertedly as a futuristic projection.

Religious fundamentalism, is, in a sense, bivalent. On the one hand it (in the case of the minorities) arises as a reaction to what is rightly or wrongly perceived to be assimilation by the Other and points towards the necessity of pluralism-both religious and political-for free flowering of the ethno-nationalism of the minorities. On the other hand it leads to religious exclusiveness in inter-community relationships and to religious absolutism in intra-community matters; these two trends are in dissonance with the spirit of pluralism.

As against unitarianism, the focus now is shifting to pluralism. In this new focussing of thought, inter-religious dialogue in its historical variety can play a vital role in nurturing the spirit of pluralism that recognizes distinctive, self-determined identities of different faiths and seeks on the basis of such a recognition inter-community understanding and accommodation. Sikhism has a significant role to play in this process.

The intrinsic pluralist spirit of Sikh religion, on the doctrinal level, is clearly stressed by Guru Nanak in his composition *Japji* wherein he refers to the infinity and inexhaustability of the attributes and aspects of the Divine, not comprehensible in their totality by any single revelation. Secondly, in *Japji* itself Guru Nanak accepts the epistemologic relativity of the modes of cognition of ultimate reality. The form in which ultimate reality is

known is relative to the mode of apprehension. He expresses this idea figuratively by saying that the brave sees God in the form of Might; the intellectual comprehends Him in the form of Light (of knowledge); the aesthete perceives the Divine in His aspect of Beauty; the moralist envisions Him as Goodness, etc. Thirdly, apart from the relativity of the modes of revelation, Sikh religion contends not only the universality but also the historicity of the content of revelation, whereby each revelation is seen as a historically conditioned expressive form of God: Guru Nanak says that different revelations and manifestations of God in different times and places are like the changing seasons which refer back to a single centre, the Sun.

Each revelation is a stage in the development of spiritual consciousness of man. The descent of God in His various revelations, perceptions and cognitions is, in a sense, the ascent of the spiritual consciousness of man through different paths to the Divine.

A pluralist acceptance of the validity and legitimacy of different faiths in their distinctive identities implies acceptance of the group-identities of different individuals and communities as co-equal entities. Says Guru Arjun :

All are co-equal partners in The Commonwealth, with none treated as alien. *(Sri Guru Granth, P. 97)*

Universality of mankind and unity between different faiths and communities is, thus, no longer seen as based on homogenization of their distinctive traditions and identities.

Because of its inherent pluralist spirit, the Sikh tradition, the Sikh identity, is essentially a self-expanding, (and not a self-limiting, exclusivist) category vis-a-vis other traditions. Internally, the pluralist spirit of Sikhism accounts for its liberalism and catholicity of outlook, with no place for absolutism and totalitarianism of any kind therein.

Though Sikhism does not treat religion as a private

affair between the individual and his God and accords to religion a social role in the dynamics of change of society and system, yet it treats the religious and the secular domain as distinct from each other, their autonomies in their respective areas reveal a normative unity in the realm of values.

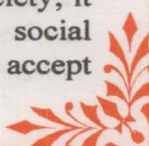
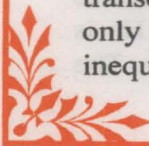
Sikhism with its intrinsic pluralist spirit can contribute a lot towards inter-faith understanding and inter-community accomodation, as well as towards the emergence of a new pluralist world-order that would ensure for all human beings—without discrimination of any kind and in any form—their inalienable right to human dignity and freedom.



SIKHISM AND BHAKTI MOVEMENT

The Bhakti spectrum of medieval India had on its one end the reformist and on the other extremity the revolutionary colour; inbetween there were other colourings-critical, protestant, rebellious, etc. All these motifs and different metaphysical postulates, ideological orientations, had sociological implications, though they shared a common ethos characterized by rejection of religious formalism, priestly mediation, caste distinctions, and polytheistic diversity of gods and goddesses. The Bhakti movement had two distinct metaphysical planks—one provided by Ramanuja, and the other by Guru Nanak. Ramanuja's philosophy, in sharp contrast to that of Shankara, stressed that there exists a real and direct relationship between man and God, between the finite and the infinite reality. The infinite substance (*Brahman*) is present in all its transformations; the essence (*nam*) is manifest in its various forms (*rup*). From here developed two branches of Bhakti movement. The Sant tradition of Kabir (*nirgun* Bhakti) laid stress on the abstract essence (*nam*) embodied in *Shabda*. The Vaishanava current emphasized on the concrete form (*rup*); correspondingly the Bhakti love and adoration came to be focused on Lord Ram and Lord Krishna as incarnations (forms) of Vishnu (essence).

In its quest for the abstract essence, the Sant tradition transcended the concrete phenomena of life and society; it only protested against the caste rigidities and social inequalities. At its best the Sant tradition did not accept



the system, depising it as transitory and devoid of the essence in its social and moral degradation. But the essence was sought outside of the system; hence it could only go to the extent of being protestant without seeking radical change in the set-up.

On the other hand, the Vaishanava tradition made its adoration of the form (*rup*) so sensual that in the heat of passionate Bhakti love there remained no consciousness of the empirical evils and inequities of the system. As such this tradition on the sociological level tended to be conservative at worst, and a reformatory current within the system at its best. With just 40 hymns (reverentially preserved in the Sikh Scripture, *Sri Guru Granth*, Sant Ravidas, a contemporary of Kabir,² has emerged over the centuries as a frontranker in the Bhakti movement of medieval India, with continuing contemporary relevance particularly for the existential situation in which his followers find themselves today. This position is attributed to the intensity of his spiritual experience and the poignancy of its expression; but more than that, it is due to his rebellious spirit and the peculiar way of its articulation that defied the system as well as the tradition that fortified that set-up.

The rebelliousness of the Sant has been attempted to be softened, gradually but steadily, by painting him as just another redeemer of the system, an "insider" who sought more elbow-room horizontally and vertically for his low-caste fraternity.

The interpretational approaches to Sant Ravidas make a good case study revealing the currents and cross-currents in the Bhakti movement.

The rebellious Sant Ravidas, in reality, does not belong to either of the two above mentioned currents of the Bhakti movement; though he has been bracketed with the protestant Sant tradition. But even his protestant stance has been sought to be diluted in a variety of ways. He is being "proved" to be a disciple of Ramanand: The

expressions used by him for God—Ram, Raja Ram, Raghunath, Hari, Madhava, Murari, Mukand, Gobind, etc.—are interpreted to mean that he belonged to the conservative-reformist *saguna* Bhakti tradition. Further, it is contended that he was a cobbler, a tanner (*chamar*) not by birth but by choice, as his father is shown to be a high-caste rich businessman. That he boldly calls himself a *chamar* is seen as an expression of his humility, and not an admission of a fact.

Why this face-lifting of Sant Ravidas? The reasons are ideological and sociological. When Ravidas, on the threshold of spiritual enlightenment, made an idol from a hide, it was not for the purpose of worship of the deity; the idea was to provoke and defy the Brahminical reaction that considered animal skin as too profane a material to be turned into a sacred object of worship. Retorted Ravidas that God was present in man, in animal, as also in animal skin. *Here was a turning point for the ideology of the Bhakti movement as a whole : The profane is sacred.* What is conventionally held as profane intrinsically possesses its own sanctity, legitimacy and identity not only on the spiritual but also on the sociological level. Says Ravidas in one of his verses :

Ravidas jau at pvit hai, soi shudra jan
(He who is most pious is shudra)

Latent in this expression is a revolutionary ideological approach towards the problem of the low castes and outcastes—an approach that seeks sanctity, legitimacy, and vertical mobility for these strata in their own self-identity. That is why in verse after verse Ravidas is boldly asserting his self-identity as a *chamar*, and seeking spiritual and social salvation as such, and not under any imitated, simulated, alien identity borrowed from the higher castes. It was this approach that was conceptualized by Guru Nanak, and institutionalized by Guru Gobind Singh through the baptismal ceremony of amrit, providing a new principle, channel and process of

vertical movement for the lower castes and classes in their own right and in their own self-identity (Nawab Jassa Singh continued to be known as *kalal* in self-glorification of his low-caste identity).

This approach stands in sharp contrast to the traditional approach known as sanskritization wherein a lower caste may be permitted into the higher structures of the caste-bound society by shedding its original identity, and imitating and adopting the caste-denominations, behaviour-patterns, and value system of the higher castes and classes; herein a lower caste is not conceded any sanctity and legitimacy in its own self-identity. It was, in a sense, within the frame-work of a modified version of sanskritization that Mahatma Gandhi sought to integrate the scheduled castes into the society by giving them a new high-sounding identity as *Harijans*. Further, opposition to the principle of separate electorates for the scheduled castes, proposed in the Ramsay MacDonald Award announced on April 16, 1932, was not merely a political issue but also a matter of ideological approach that conceded no separate self-identity to these castes in their own right. So Sant Ravidas's non-conventional rebellious approach has to be toned down if the other approach is to succeed !

History alone would determine in the long run as to which of the two approaches scores over the other. But where is the "the long run" ?

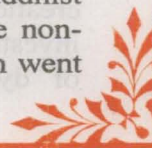
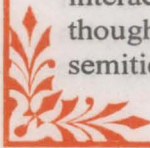


SIKHISM AND SUFISM

(BABA SHEIKH FARID IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE)

Farid-ud-Din Masuad (1173-1264d A. D.) popularly known as Baba Sheikh Farid Shakarganj, with his deep grounding in Arabic, Persian traditions, is recognized as one of the most outstanding scholars of the medieval-age Islamic civilization. In the strife-torn Indian society of his times, he played a great harmonizing role symbolized by the appellation "Shakar-Ganj" (store-house of sugar=sweetness). Being the first known poet of the Punjabi language, he stands out as the fountainhead of the subsequent Punjabi literary streams. With his *bani* (24 *shlokas* and four *shabds*) having been included in the Sikh Scripture, Sri Guru Granth, Baba Farid is a highly venerated saint in the Sikh tradition.

He is indeed 'unique' in each aspect of his multifaceted personality. Baba Farid has exercised deep and pervasive influence and impact by his Sufi practices and teachings not only in the undivided Punjab but in other parts of India as well as Afghanistan. Sufism is the generic name given to Islamic mysticism that emerged in different forms in different regions of the Islamic world owing to a variety of reasons and factors. While spreading beyond the Arab lands, Islam, *en route*, imbibed new elements from external local sources, particularly in interaction with Neoplatonic, Vedantic and Buddhist thought. While reaching Iran, Islam partook of the non-semitic traditions. The political ascendancy of Islam went



hand in hand with Islamic theological orthodoxy; the theological formalism with stress on rigid observance of the shariat became an ideological tool of political Islam which became oriented towards totalitarianism. It was as a response and reaction to these causes and factors that mystical trends arose within Islamic praxis, seeking to accommodate the basic doctrine to the new environs as also to cleanse it of the encrusting formalism. The common denominator of these Sufi trends, which gradually developed into institutionalized Orders (*silsilas*), was the stress on the experiential immediacy in direct communion with God whose unmediated Presence was felt through different stages from the sensuous to the supra-sensory. The spectrum of Sufism contains variegated, intermixed patterns of colours: self-purifying asceticism as well as sensory frenzy; dread of God as well as devotion to the Divine; self-negation in the Absolute as well as self-realization in the ultimate Being; pangs of separation as well as ecstasy of union with the Beloved.

The feel of the Divine Presence in Sufi thought and practice, that is, in Islamic mysticism, is cognized within the basic Islamic doctrine, despite extraneous influences imbibed by Sufism in its evolutionary courses. The metaphysical basis of the Divine Presence-direct communion and experiential immediacy—is distinct from pantheism as also from the Vedantic conception of the immanence of *Brahman*. Both in the basic Islamic doctrine and the Sufi metaphysics in its various Orders, God remains a transcendental reality.

The world of time and space (*khalq*) is deemed to be creation of God (*Khaliq*). The Islamic idea of creation—which is different from the Christian as well as the Sikh conception—has deeply influenced certain significant Sufi postulates, as we shall see later. Islamic ontology takes creation to be of discrete, atomistic character; it is not invested with internal causality (*hukam*) and the principles of dynamism which, in Sikh philosophy, makes the

universe autonomous in its state of becoming and development. Consequently for Islamic speculative thinking, the universe for its existence is characterized by continual, moment-to-moment dependence upon God. This ontological dependence was turned into the Sufi idea of *raza* connoting submission and resignation of the individual to the Absolute Will; political Islam used it as an ideological instrument for claiming willing obedience of the followers for its theocratic state. Under influence of Neoplatonism, the ontological dependence of the universe on God got transformed into epistemologic dependence. The universe (existence) was taken to be the externalization of the ideas (essence) of God. This led to the question of relationship between existence and essence, a question which elicited two answers dividing the Sufi mystics into two distinctive schools of thought. The "Wajudiyyah" school stressed the absolute, monistic identity of essence and existence (*hama ost* = All is God). Here essence and existence were seen as one in *substantial* unity. The other school ("Shuhūdiyyah") believed in the relative unity of essence and existence—a kind of *ideatinal* unity in which the distinctiveness of the two is also treated as true and real (*hama az ost*—All is from God). Here Sufistic *fana* does not mean self-extinction; it, rather, *means* the passing of the existential aspect of the self into its essential aspect in which it abidingly subsists as an idea in the mind of God. Credit goes to Imam Ghazali who taught at Nizamiyah Academy at Baghdad, for providing to Sufi mysticism systematic schemata and bringing orthodox Sufism into Sunni theology. The Spanish scholar, Sheikh Muhiuddin Arabi (1165-1240 A. D.) and the Persian mystic Maulana Jalaludin Rumi, surcharged Sufism with emotinal elan vital. Ibn Arabi propounded and propagated the doctrine of *Wahdat-ul-wujud* (unity of reality) forming the basis of the Wajudiyyah school. The other school of Sufi metaphysics-Shuhudiyyah—was founded by Ruknuddin

Alaud Dawlah at Baghdad.

These two schools of Sufi thought flowered out into a number of Orders (*silsilas*) : Zaydiyyah; Iyadivyyah; Adhamiyyah; Ajamiyyah; Jayfariyyah; Karkhiyyah; Saqatiyyah; Junaydiyyah, Harbairiyyah; Chishtiyyah; Garzaroniyyah; Jusiyyah; Suhravardiyyah; Firdausiyyah; Naqshbandiyyah; and Qadiriyyah; Out of these, four Orders became very popular in India: Chishtiyyah, Naqshbandiyyah, Qadiriyyah and Suhravardiyyah—the most important being the Chishtiyyah (Chishti in Punjabi) to which belonged Baba Farid whose philosophy is closer to the Shuhudiyyah school as he believes in the unity as well as the distinctiveness of the *Khaliq* (Creator) and the *khalq* (creation). This also indicates the proximity of Farid's view to the Nanakian thought. The spirit of religious pluralism and the consequential tolerance pervasive in the Faridian ethos is also due to the underlying postulate of relative (as against the absolute) unity of essence and existence. Ontological monism, contending the absolute unity of essence and existence and the total identity of man and God in the Absolute One looks attractive, but also contains a dangerous propensity towards theological unitarianism and political totalitarianism : The stress on the absolutist oneness of reality tends to imply the notion of obligatory oneness of the path to the exclusion of all other options, whether in theology or in polity.

Sheikh Farid's ancestors had migrated from Central Asia to India during the period of Mongol invasions there, which caused an influx of a large number of Muslim scholars and saints into India where they found refuge. (The Mongols were not yet converted to Islam then). Farid was born at Khatwal, near Multan, now known as Chawli Mashaikh (Pakistan). Multan, then a great centre of learning, was the place where Farid in his early life studied theology and mastered the Arabic and Persian languages, and came under the influence of the Chishti

Order of Sufism. The Chishti *silsila* was founded by well-known Iraqi saint, Shaikh Ishaq Chishti. This Order was introduced in India toward the close of the twelfth century by one of his successors, Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti (remembered by the masses as Khwaja Gharib Nawaz) who set up a centre at Ajmer. His great disciple, Khwaja Qutbuddin, was the preceptor of Sheikh Farid who under his spiritual guide did ascetic Sufi practices, at Delhi, including *Chilla-i-Makus* (a forty-day course of prayer with head hung downwards). After achieving a high degree of proficiency and insight into Sufi teachings and practices, Sheikh Farid shifted to Hansi where he lived and spread Sufi enlightenment for a number of years. After Hansi, he chose to settle down at Ajodhan, now known as Pak-Pattan (Pakistan) in sacred memory of Baba Farid. One of the most famous disciples of Baba Farid was Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi.

Baba Farid's far-reaching influence in the Punjab (then stretching from Peshwar to Delhi) and beyond, was due as much to his austere, piety-informed personal life as to the thematic and expressional values of his poetic compositions that have come down to us in their authentic form through Sri Guru Granth. The basic Islamic doctrine of the discrete, atomistic nature of the universe and its moment-to-moment dependence upon God (a notion similar to the concept, in physics, of continual creation and destruction of matter each moment) became, in Farid's writings, the Sufistic refrain of the evanescence of life and the dreadful suddenness of death. Baba Farid employs the powerful metaphor of *kasumbha* (a redish flower the colour of which vanishes soon) to convey his message of the transitoriness of life and its momentary pleasures as against the abiding bliss of union with the Beloved (God), separation from Whom means unbearable pangs of mental agony. This refrain however did not yield pessimism or escape from the world; rather it was used to inculcate in the human heart the remorseful sense of

waste in the worthless pursuit of the wordly goods. It was also used to emphasize the hollowness of the social system of his times. But this attitude would not lead to a confrontation with the state or to a revolutionary praxis, as it did in the case of the Sikh movement. On the other hand Baba Farid's Sufistic response to the socio-politico moral degeneration of his day was that of a stress on reformation-internal reformation in the sense of self-purification and external reformation of the Islamic dispensation in India by giving it a tolerant, liberal, humanistic orientation, thereby propagating a pluralsitic trend of Islamic piety as against the pre-dominant militant unitarian Muslim polity. Here we can discern the ideological role of Baba Farid and his Chishti *silsila* in general. He sought to acclimatize Islam to the Indian conditions as also to prepare the Indian cultural soil for Islam to strike deep roots therein. In this (conscious or unconscious?) process Baba Farid was, in a sense, endeavouring to evolve a kind of Indo-Islamic tradition that would be an integral part of Indian culture and civilization. That is why and how he chose to employ the indigenous local language of the people—Punjabi as well as the local, down-to-earth, images, motifs and myths. His symbology was an essential ingredient of his ideological role. This, among other things, made him the first known poet of the Punjabi language. Thus right in the beginning the Punjabi literary tradition, thanks to Baba Farid's legacy, came to acquire a non-scholastic, realistic, liberal and humanistic character that has continued down to the present age.

Both the Muslims and non-Muslims in the Indian subcontinent will have to rediscover the Indo-Islamic tradition (as distinct from the pan-Islamic traditions) that Baba Farid sought to evolve in his great synthesizing role. It would be pertinent to mention in this context that in his earlier phases Iqbal, in the present century, was, in fact, trying to realize his community's moorings in the Indo-Islamic tradition as is clear from his famous poem—*saare*

jahan se achha Hindostan hamara—the last two lines of which we, Indians, have intriguingly dropped out ! But when Iqbal rightly or wrongly felt betrayed he turned towards the pan-Islamic tradition. That marked a turning point in the thought-processes of the Indian Muslims in the pre-1947 era.

Now when on the threshold of the twentyfirst century the peoples all over the world are once again realizing the significance, efficacy and elan vital of ethno-nationalism, it is time that the people of the Indian sub-continent turned towards the Indo-Muslim tradition as perceived by Baba Farid. The social dialectic today relates to ethno-nationalistic contradictions and not to class contradictions among the nations. The imperatives of ethno-nationalism in the Indian sub-continent necessitates a turning back to Baba Farid and his Indo-Islamic tradition that he attempted, to make into an integral part of Indian civilization. The non-Muslims while superficially paying tributes to the harmonizing and synthesizing role of Baba Farid have still to accept wholeheartedly this Indo-Islamic tradition as a constituent element of composite Indian heritage.

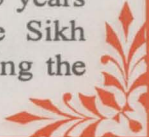
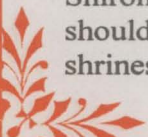


TOWARDS THE SECOND SIKH REFORMATION

The Sikh ideology of the first Sikh reformation in the modern era that arose in the last quarter of the 19th century has well served its time, but we have to move on to the next phase of the Sikh renaissance and reformation through a new ideology in tune with contemporary realities on national and global levels. The new ideology—the second Sikh reformation—has to address itself to certain inescapable basic issues.

Sikhism, being an institutional religion, has both universal and historical aspect. The Prophetic message and the institutional infrastructure that emerged during the Guru period reveal a balanced development of the two aspects of the Sikh faith. But after the Guru-period the Sikh praxis could not retain this balance and the historical dimension took precedence over the universal dimension. The universal, humanistic concerns of Sikhism became subordinate to the existential concerns of the Sikh—a legacy of the first Sikh reformation which in response to the crisis after the end of the Sikh raj addressed itself to religious *revival* and *physical* survival of the Sikhs. The second Sikh reformation has to restore the balance between the universal-humanistic concerns of Sikhism and the historical-existentialist concerns of the Sikhs.

The inter-dependent, symbiotic relationship between the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and the Shiromani Akali Dal that has continued for over 75 years should come to an end in mutual interest. The Sikh shrines liberated from the hereditary *mahants* during the



gurdwara reform movement in the twenties were handled by Akali volunteers who in due course forged themselves as a political party of the Sikhs, pushing to the background the Central Sikh League. In this relationship of inter-dependence the SGPC and the Akali Dal have reciprocally derived strength from each other but also have shared each other's weaknesses. The situation today demands a radical change. The SGPC, free from its symbiotic relationship with the Akali Dal, should concentrate on cleansing, modernising and updating the gurdwara management, adopting modern means for propagating the faith. Further, the SGPC should devote itself to ideological issues, leaving it to separate political institutions and organisations to give political articulation to the Sikh consciousness. Sri Akal Takht should not be made into Akali Takht, this supreme institution of Sikhism should primarily concern itself with universalistic concerns of Sikhism and with such issues as have bearing on the very being of the Sikhs.

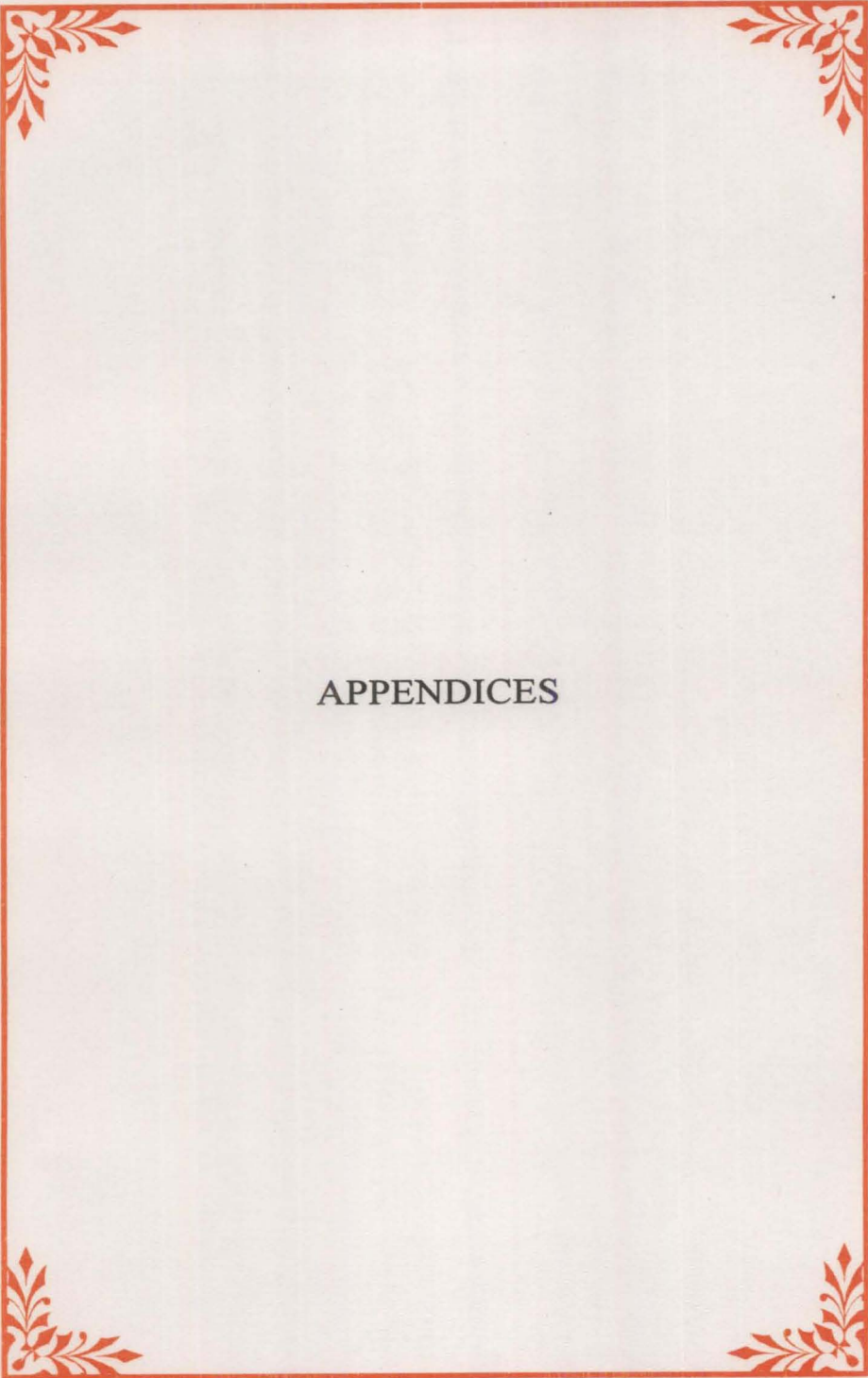
This leads one to another basic issue : the question of the Sikhs—or for that matter, the other minorities in different parts of the world—having their own political organisation (s). Thanks to the dynamics of modernization and other contingent spatio-temporal factors, the minorities all over the world are becoming self-conscious about their ethno-religious, ethno-social and ethno-political identities. Such self-awareness on the part of the minorities inevitably seeks political articulation and corporate expression through their own political organisations. Seen in this context, communitarian interest-articulation and political self-expression is a political *genre* different from communal politics or communalism. While communalism is marked by an inner logic of exclusivism, corporate self-expression of a community at the political level can well serve as a means for corporate integration of the community into the national mainstream. From this angle the present

organisation or any other *periodical* institution of the Sikhs that may emerge in the future has its *raison d'etre* as a vehicle of political self-consciousness of the Sikhs *qua* a distinctive community, and can, as such, play a positive role-distinct from communal politics—in the national body-politic of our country.

Since 1947 the Sikhs *qua* individuals have got integrated on social and economic levels with our national fabric. But this individualistic integration has not led to their corporate integration with the national body-politic of India owing to a variety of reasons and factors.

Corporate integration of the Sikhs into the national body-politic on a lasting basis will be facilitated through their distinctive institutions and organisations expressing their political self-consciousness in positive ways. However, when the identity-consciousness is conceived and pursued in a negative way, particularly in the context of hostile, repressive environs, it leads reactively to fundamentalism.

This brings us back to the central question of evolving a new liberal, forward-looking Sikh ideology and a new democratic Sikh praxis.



APPENDICES



I

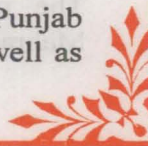
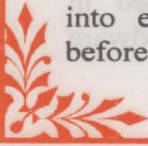
THE GURDWARA INSTITUTION

THE PRE-1925 GURDWARAS MANAGEMENT

The *masands* entrusted with the management of the Sikh religious places executed their responsibilities well during the period of the fourth and fifth Prophets of Sikhism. However with the passage of time, the *masand* system became corrupt and decadent and had to be abolished by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last Prophet of Sikh religion; the management was kept in the hands of the Khalsa Panth by the Guru. During the Sikh struggle of the eighteenth century against the oppressive Mughal rule, the *Udasis* took over the management of the Sikh shrines and maintained them properly. But with the subsequent generations of the *Udasis* the Gurdwara management came under the control of the hereditary *mahants*; the Gurdwara far from remaining an institution of Sikhism came to be misused as a "property" with all the attendant morally corrupt practices as well as certain 'ceremonies' contrary to the tenets of Sikh religion.

The Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925

It was in this background that the Gurdwaras reform movement-starting in 1920 and representing the Sikh renaissance that, among other things, brought the Sikhs into the national mainstream as well as in the forefront of the national freedom struggle-culminated in the enactment of the Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925. This Act under which the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee came into existence extended to the pre-partitioned Punjab before 1947 and covered the historical shrines as well as



certain other Gurdwaras notified under the Act. The Act now extends to the Punjab as it existed before its re-organization in the year 1966. The 1925 Act envisages a single Board named as the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee that directly manages under section 85 certain notified Gurdwaras in Punjab, Union Territory of Chandigarh, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, as well as the Darbar Sahib, the Akal Takht, and the two Takhts at Anandpur Sahib and Damdama Sahib. For other notified Gurdwaras in the above-mentioned areas the Act provides for management committees under section 86 with the S. G. P. C. having the general powers of superintendence and supervision over the committees. The Punjab Re-organization Act, 1966, made the 1925 Act to be an inter-state Act. The elections for the S. G. P. C. are to be got done by the Central Government. The tenure of the S. G. P. C. and of the local committees is five years or until the constitutions of the new Board (S. G. P. C.)/ committees after elections (whichever be later).

GURDWARAS MANAGEMENT IN OTHER PARTS OF INDIA

As regards the Gurdwaras in other parts of India, there are diverse management systems lacking symmetry and coherence. The *mahants* in Delhi voluntarily, and without the kind of crusade that took place in Punjab in the pre-1925 period, passed on the control of the Gurdwaras to the S. G. P. C., Amritsar. This parent body managed these shrines through nomination of representatives as well as elections till 1942 when the Delhi Gurdwaras Committee was got registered by the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee under the Societies Registration Act. Subsequently, there came into being the Delhi Gurdwaras Management Act, 1971, that separated off the Delhi Gurdwaras from the S. G. P. C. The management of the Sikh shrines at Nanded in Maharashtra is regulated by the Nanded Sikh Gurudwara

Sach Khand Sri Hazur Abchal Nagar Sahib Act of 1956. The Act confers vast jurisdiction on the state government that is empowered to (a) nominate members of the Board including nomination of the Chairman, (b) to supersede the Board and (c) to issue binding directions. The Gurdwaras in Jammu and Kashmir are governed by the J & K Sikh Gurdwaras & Religious Endowments Act, 1973. The management of the Patna Sahib Takht and other associated Gurdwaras there rests with the District Judge, Patna, under the provisions of the Religious Endowments Act, 1863, who has the powers, inter-alia, to appoint the Manager of the Takht. Mysore Religious and Charitable Institution Act, 1927; Orissa Hindu Religious Endowments Act, 1959; Andhra Pradesh Charitable and Hindu Religious Institutions & Endowments Act, 1966, are applicable to the Gurdwaras in their respective areas, while the Public Trusts Acts of Bombay, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have within their ambits the Gurdwaras situated in their respective jurisdictions. It is this diversity of forms of management, inter alia, standing in the way of the observance of uniform Sikh *rehit maryada* (religious sacraments and ceremonies) in the Sikh shrines, that is sought to be resolved into a coherent pattern through the proposed All India Sikh Gurdwaras Act.

DEMAND FOR ALL INDIA LEGISLATION

The demand for an All India Gurdwaras legislation has been raised by the Sikhs from time to time over the past many decades. The S.G.P.C. in its meeting in November, 1926, passed a resolution for extending the 1925 Act to cover all the Gurdwaras in India including the princely states. The Nehru-Tara Singh Pact of 1959 also envisaged enactment of an All India Gurdwaras legislation. The then Home Minister of India while speaking on the occasion of the 400th Foundation Anniversary Celebration of the holy city of Amritsar in 1977 assured that the desired All India legislation would be got enacted expeditiously.

On November 4, 1977, the Punjab Government appointed a Drafting Committee headed by S. Harbans Singh, former Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. The Draft (referred to herein as the 1979 Draft) was submitted to the Punjab Government. However as observed by S. Kashmir Singh (in his Paper included in a Publication of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1986) the draft Bill "was more or less a handiwork of S. Harbans Singh alone who had not paid much attention to the views of the other members. They were even unaware about what passed into the draft later on. The report which was submitted to the Government was signed by the chairman alone."

THE RAJIV-LONGOWAL ACCORD

The enactment of All India Sikh Gurdwaras legislation was again envisaged in clause 5.1 of the Rajiv-Longwal Accord. The proposed enactment is an important part of the historic Punjab Accord, being one of the major demands of the Sikhs since 1947; it is also in consonance with the national secular polity reflected in Article 26 of our Constitution which confers on various religious groups a fundamental right as regards management of their religious institutions. Further, for the governance of their religious institutions, the Muslims have the Wakf Act, 1954. In most of the States of India there are in operation the Hindu Religious Endowments Acts. The proposed Act will not only satisfy a long-pending demand of the Sikhs but would also go a long way in facilitating, on an abiding basis, the corporate integration of the Sikhs into the national body of our country; the interaction of the Sikhs from various regions of India through a Central Board would help counter the psychosis of self-withdrawal, exclusivism and sectarianism.

The old Draft, since its finalisation in the year 1979, had aroused different and divergent views as regards the essential structure and framework of the Gurdwaras management envisaged therein, and voices had been

raised from time to time for revising and updating it so as to have a broad general consensus of the Sikh community before the Draft took the form of an Act.

Accordingly, the State Government in 1986 set up a High-Level Review Committee under the chairmanship of Sardar Natha Singh Dalam, Minister for Public Relations.

The essential features of the All India Sikh Gurdwaras legislation were discussed in the meetings of the Committee. The Basic Approach Paper, prepared in the light of the deliberations of the Dalam Committee, was discussed and approved by the Committee as well as the then Chief Minister, whereafter it was circulated to the following dignitaries for eliciting their views thereon: S. Kabul Singh, President, S.G.P.C.; S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra; S. Parkash Singh Badal; Maharaja Amarinder Singh; S. Sukhjinder Singh and others.

In the light of the Basic Approach Paper, a new Draft was prepared by a new Drafting Committee constituted by the State Government vide Notification dt. 18th August 1986, with this writer (Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia) as its member secretary. The salient features of the new Draft were considered and approved in a meeting of the committee of the S.G.P.C. chaired by S. Kabul Singh at Chandigarh, who authenticated the approval under his signature.

The drafters held lengthy consultations with a representative cross-section of Sikh society and discussed the draft proposals with leading Sikh scholars and ideologists of different shades so as to arrive at a broad consensus. Some of the persons consulted expressed extreme views on essential aspects. A few of them recommended over-centralisation of the Gurdwara management at All India level with the suggestion that the proposed Central Board should not merely be a supervisory body vis-a-vis the Regional/State Boards but should exercise direct management, with Regional/State

Bodies having only the status of Special Committees of the apex body. Some persons suggested to extend the 1925 Act to all the historical Gurdwaras in India, including the two Takhts outside Punjab—thereby implying that the jurisdiction of the present S.G.P.C. should be extended to all the historical Gurdwaras in India. On the other extreme, some persons favoured schemata of Regional and State Boards being independent of the Central Board. Again, some persons were of the opinion that all the Gurdwaras in India including the non-historical ones as well as those of the different Sikh *sampardayas* should be within the ambit of the Central Board, while others desired that the Central Board should have purview covering only the five Sikh Takhts and Sri Harimandir Sahib and some other associated Gurdwaras. Some people opined that there should be no compulsory registration of any Gurdwara at all. On the other hand, some consultants favoured that all the Gurdwaras including those associated with the Sikh denominations (*Nirmalas, Udasis, Sewapanthis, etc.*) be compulsorily registered under the Act. The expression 'Sikh' also evoked extreme views. One section favoured a liberal definition including the *Sehajdharis* as in the 1925 Act. The other section desired that the 'Sikh' should mean only the *Keshadhari*, as proposed in the 1979 Draft.

SALIENT PROVISIONS OF THE NEW DRAFT AND COMPARATIVE OVER-VIEW VIS-A-VIS THE 1979 DRAFT

1. The new Draft strikes a middle course, thus ensuring broadest possible consensus of the Sikh community. The new Draft, envisaging an integral federal framework, has proposed an inter-related three-tier system of management. There will be a Central Board, having All India Sikh (proportional) representation, as the apex body with supervisory powers in respect of the Regional/State Boards and the historical and notified Gurdwaras thereunder. The purview of the Central Board extends to all the Gurdwaras including

the non-historical ones in so far as the observance of the *Sikh rehit maryada* is concerned. The Central Board shall also directly manage Sri Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar, the five Sikh Takhts and certain other Gurdwaras.

2. The Regional/State Boards will have full autonomy of management powers in respect of the Gurdwaras within their respective ambits.
3. There will be Local Committees for Gurdwaras or a group of Gurdwaras for ensuring grass-roots participation of the *sangat* in the Gurdwara management.

In other words, there will be autonomous Regional/State Boards for management of the Gurdwaras in their respective areas with integral inter-relationship of these Boards with the Central Board so as to realise true federal form in integral framework.

There being All India Sikh representation on the Central Board in the new Draft, all the Sikhs as a whole would come to have equitable say over all the historical Gurdwaras in India. The 1979 Draft envisaged separate, virtually independent, Regional/State Boards for other States, with the S.G.P.C., in its new incarnation, as being the Central Board invested with jurisdiction over all the five Takhts in India, apart from certain other historical shrines.

4. The term 'Sikh' in the new Draft includes *Sehajdhari* persons as in the 1925 Act. The *Sehajdharis* will also be eligible to be coopted/nominated members of the Central/Regional/State Boards, while there is a condition that only *Amritdhari* Sikhs would be eligible for election to the membership of the Central/Regional/State Boards as in the 1925 Act. The 1979 Draft had narrowed down and restricted the term 'Sikh' only to the *Keshadhari*.
5. There shall be obligatory registration for the historical/notified Gurdwaras, while registration will be optional

for other Gurdwaras. (The 1979 Draft provided for compulsory registration of all the Gurdwaras in India). The Gurdwaras which voluntarily opt for registration have been made entitled to certain privileges and benefits, qua registered Gurdwaras, such as exemption from income tax, etc; registration, when so opted for, will also give representation to the management of the Gurdwara on the electoral college for electing Regional/State Boards. Thus, optional registration has been made attractive enough without bringing in the element of coercion which is not only contrary to the liberal spirit of religion but might also result in quite a large number of shrines declaring themselves as not being Gurdwaras at all.

6. The Gurdwaras of the Nirmala Maha Mandal, Udaseen Maha Mandal and Sewa Panthi Sampardayae have been exempted from the obligation of registration; these Gurdwaras shall also be outside of the management ambit of the Boards.
7. New provisions (not there in 1979 Draft) have been incorporated in the new Draft to ensure independence of the Akal Takht Jathedar from the day-to-day Party politics.
8. New mandatory provision has been incorporated in the new Draft for 'On-the-Schedule' elections of the Central, Regional and State Boards, except in certain unavoidable contingencies and extraordinary circumstances, in which case postponement for a specified period of one year at a time shall have to be done through a notification by the Central Govt., specifying the reasons for such postponement.
9. For selection of the Administrative Officers for the Boards and of such other categories and classes of employees that may be decided upon by the Central/Regional/State Board, there will be a Sikh Gurdwaras Service Commission (new provision not there in 1979 Draft). This would go a long way in modernizing and

streamlining the Gurdwara management.

Thus, the principle of self-administration has been adopted in the Gurdwara management in this respect. The provision in the 1979 Draft to compulsorily have Administrative Officers for each Board from amongst the officers of IAS or State Services, on deputation, etc., has been deleted.

10. Due representation has been provided for the backward classes/scheduled castes.
11. A sparate Appellate Authority over the Gurdwaras Tribunal has been envisaged in the new Draft so as to ensure that the Gurdwara litigation does not drag on for decades together in the ordinary appellate forums with involved procedures. No such Authority was envisaged in the 1979 Draft.

It is hoped that the proposed measures would, inter-alia, strengthen the contemporary Sikh praxis in realizing the universalistic, liberal, forward-looking values of Sikhism as also in enabling the Sikh community to play its constructive role in the national mainstream. The proposed Draft would also ensure both democratization and modernization of the Gurdwara management with the entire Sikh community having a say in managing their holy shrines free from exigencies of the day-to-day Party politics.

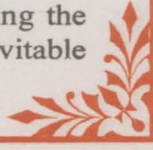
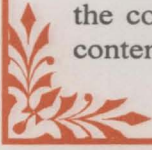


II THE BILLS DELINKING POLITICS AND RELIGION

(TOWARDS AN ENLIGHTENED SIKH VIEWPOINT)

The Constitution (Eightieth Amendment) Bill 1993 and The Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill have evoked reactions among the political parties on predictable lines and polemical idioms. While the Congress party has hailed the proposed measures as the long over-due means for strengthening secularism and secular polity and for keeping the electoral processes free from the 'misuse' of religion, the opposition parties have taken opposite stands. Apprehensions have been expressed about the likely malafide use of the provisions for suppressing mass movements of the people. It has been argued that the delinking of politics from religion would knock out the *dharmic* basis of national polity which, then, would be further eroded in terms of its value-syndrome. Impracticability of the new provisions has been given another ground for their rejection.

The minorities have their own apprehensions about these Bills, though their reactions have also not been well articulated analytically on ideological and political levels. The Akali leadership has taken its usual stand that in Sikhism there is inherent unity of religion and politics and the Bills would as such strike at the very basis of the Sikh identity, the over-simplistic interpretation of this Sikh concept has neither comprehended its complexity nor its relevance in the context of the present day realities, thus making the contemporary Sikh praxis out of tune with the inevitable



currents of historical processes of the modern age. A significant decision of far-reaching implication on the basis of existing law given by the Supreme Court of India (A.I.R. 1985 S.C.236), in which the role of Sri Akal Takht was discussed in the context of electoral processes, has also not been taken into reckoning by the Sikh leadership in reacting to the proposed constitutional and legal legislation (not enacted yet).

It is high time for evolving and projecting an enlightened Sikh viewpoint after thorough deliberations at serious levels rising above the exigencies of the day-to-day politics.

For a serious intra-community dialogue and discussion, it is essential to recapitulate in brief as to what the Sikh concept of unity of religion and politics (*miri-piri*) means and *what it means not*. First, on the doctrinal level, it means that Sikhism is concerned not only with the other-worldly concerns of man in relation to God, but also with the this-worldly temporal concerns of man in relation to society and state. Sikh religion in its universal mission envisions conception of ideal man, of ideal society, of ideal state, the historical concretising of which has to be done ideologically by each age in terms of its own spatio-temporal specifics. Secondly, the concept, on historical level, implies the institutional super-structure of the faith in the evolutionary course of which the faith-followers were transformed into the Order of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh, preceded by the erection of Sri Akal Takht (temporal centre) both physically and institutionally distinct from Sri Harimandar Sahib (spiritual centre). The third implication of the basic concept of unity of religion and politics follows from the above one that the Sikhs have a dual corporate identity, both as a religious group as well as a political community. The fourth implication, in the present-day context, is that the Sikh community, having become for the first time after the Guru period, self-conscious about its ethno-religious, ethno-cultural, ethno-social and ethno-political identity, has an inherent right which is in consonance with the fundamental

right to form association enshrined in Article 19 of our Constitution to have their institutions and organisations for expression of their communitarian self-identity and its free and unfettered flowering within the national body-politic of India. This right should be distinguished from communal politics, which is entirely a different political *genre*. In other words, the *miri-piri* concept means correlation of religion and politics and not their coalescence and indiscriminate mix-up; by the same logic it means values-based politics and not expediency-oriented power politics.

In this context, it is also essential to understand what this concept *does not mean*. First, it does not mean the centering of the religious and the political (temporal) authorities into a single institution or a single individual (after the Guru-period) in the manner of the mediæval age theocratic traditions of Muslim Caliph and Christian Pope. Sri Akal Takht—supreme in its own way—and its Jathedar (who is termed as a Head Minister in the 1925 Gurdwaras Act) have no correspondence to the above-mentioned Muslim and Christian institutions. Secondly, the concept under discussion does not envisage, theoretically and historically, use of political power for propagation of religious faith. Thirdly, it also does not envisage use of religious means and the faith syndrome for political ends. Fourthly, it also does not imply articulation of the cultural, linguistic, economic and political demands of the Sikhs with secular content in religious (*dharmayudh*) form. This also is a mediæval age praxis. Fifthly, political power acquired by the Sikhs as a political community—to which they are entitled—is to be used not for the pre-dominance of the Sikh community over other communities in the form of Sikh State *of* the Sikhs, *by* the Sikhs, and *for* the Sikhs. This would be contrary to Guru Arjun's ideal of a commonwealth of mankind in which all are co-equal partners with none to be treated as alien or inferior (Guru Granth, Page 97). Fifthly, the concept, under reference—and this has direct bearing on the issue of the proposed constitutional and legal

legislations—does not mean indiscriminate mix-up of religious and political institutions of the Sikhs, notwithstanding their dual identity as a religious group and a political community. The differentiation of the two domains—religious and temporal—has been clearly laid down by Guru Gobind Singh in the following words in *Bachittar Natak* :

The House of Baba (Nanak)

And the House of Babur (worldly ruler)—

Both are creations of God :

One reigns in the spiritual domain
and the other in secular affairs.

The tenth Prophet of Sikhism further added that, of course, in the event of clash between man's allegiance to God—and all that it implies—and his allegiance to worldly state, the former should take precedence over the latter—this being the core assertion of all religions.

The above commandment of Guru Gobind Singh clearly demarcates the two domains of religion and politics and of their corresponding institutions and organisations to be kept distinct from each other, without any over-lapping. In the present-day context, it means that the domain and role of Sri Akal Takht relates to the universalistic temporal concerns of Sikhism and Sikh society, and not to the party politics of the Sikhs in Punjab. Secondly, the domain of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee is that of Gurdwaras management, its reformation, and of providing ideological enlightenment to the Sikhs, the political articulation of which should be done on a separate plank by their separate political organisations—the Shiromani Akali Dal or any other political organisation that may take its place in future. The existence of distinctive political organisation(s) of the Sikhs has its *raison d'etre*, in the right to political articulation of self-consciousness of the Sikhs about their corporate self-identity; but this self-consciousness needs to be expressed in political terms, without fall-back on the soft options provided by indiscriminate mix-up of religion and politics.

Here it would be pertinent to refer to the 1985 decision of the Supreme Court that set aside the election of S. Harcharan Singh Fattanwala on the ground that the authority of Sri Akal Takht had been invoked for electoral purposes and processes. If in the opinion of the High Court concerned a corrupt electoral practice has been committed, then, the election of the successful candidate can be set aside under Section 100(1) (b) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Under Section 123 (3) of the Act, an appeal to voters, inter alia, on ground of religion, race, caste, community or language constitutes a corrupt practice. The facts of the case as narrated in the Supreme Court Judgement (in appeal against the Punjab and Haryana High Court decision) are that the Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht on being approached by S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi dissolved, through a *Hukamnama* dated 1st March, 1980, the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal and set up a seven-member Committee, headed by Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, "which was conferred with the full powers of the Akali Dal", including the authority to select candidates for the forthcoming elections. S. Harcharan Singh Fattanwala selected by the seven-member Committee, and declared as the Panthic candidate by the Takht Jathedar, successfully contested the election to the Punjab Legislative Assembly from the Muktsar constituency defeating S. Harcharan Singh Brar. The ground taken before the Supreme Court against the election of Shri Fattanwala was to the effect that the Akal Takht authority was used in appeal for voting as a Panthic candidate and that the Takht was involved in the whole electoral process right from the constitution of the seven-member Committee and that all this amounted to invoking religion for appeal to the voters, and therefore, it constituted a corrupt electoral practice under the Representation of the People Act. The Supreme Court took into consideration the views of the concerned parties as to whether the authority on Sri Akal Takht was (a) religious; (b) religio-political or (c) just political (temporal) in nature.

The Court came to the conclusion that the Takht authority was religio-political in character, and to the extent to which it was religious authority, its involvement in the electoral process and, in particular, its appeal (deemed religious as such) to the voters amounted to a corrupt practice as defined in Section 123 (3) of the Representation of the People Act and accordingly, the election of Shri Fattanwala was set aside under the relevant provision of the said Act.

Unfortunately, this Supreme Court decision of 1985 of far-reaching implications was not at all taken notice of in the Sikh circles particularly in its bearings on the Sikh (Akali) praxis. No debate was initiated on the nature of the Akal Takht authority as to whether it was religious, religio-political or political (temporal) and the question of its role in the party politics in view of the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1951. Doctrinally, Sri Akal Takht authority is temporal in character, being the *symbol* of the temporal sovereignty vesting in the Khalsa in the sense of a societal category (political peoplehood).

The point, in the larger context—which context also includes the constitutional and legal amendments under referece, is how to square up the Sikh institutions inherited from the Sikh historical traditions with the institutions of the modern polity. If this issue is not discussed and resolved, then, either of the two things can happen in the long run. If the inherited Sikh institutions are invoked to play the kind of the role that these played, say, in the 18th century, then, the contemporary Sikh praxis would in the end stand cut off from the national body politic of India, as the existing law as well as the proposed legal and constitutional amendments would inevitably stand in the way. And if the political organisation(s) of the Sikhs choose to successfully participate in the institutions of the national polity, then, the inherited Sikh institutions would tend to be ignored and their authority would fade away either through misuse or sheer indifference. Either way it would not be a happy situation. So the underlying question crops up again—this being the question

of demarcating the respective domains of the religious and political institutions and organisations of the Sikhs.

In this context, let us take into view the proposed constitutional and legal amendments. Through the Constitution (Eightieth Amendment) Bill 1993, a new Article 28A is proposed to be inserted to the effect that the State shall have equal respect for all religions. The proposed Article 35A would empower Parliament to make law providing that any association or body of individuals may be banned if it by words, either spoken or written, promotes or attempts to promote disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will between different classes of citizens in India, inter alia, on ground of religion, race, caste, language or community. Provisions are proposed to be added to Article 102 and 109 that use of religion including religious symbols for elections to Parliament or State legislatures or attempt to promote feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will between different classes of citizens of India on grounds of religion, race, caste, community or language would be a ground for *ab initio* disqualification for contesting election. (At present under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, election can be set aside only if such corrupt practice is proved *after* the election). Further, the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1988 is proposed to be added to the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution. Significant changes are also proposed to be effected in the Representation of the People Act. At present, there is Section 29A, inserted in the Act in 1989, regarding conditions for registration of political parties for electoral purposes. One of the conditions is that the memorandum or rules and regulations of the party shall contain a provision specifically declaring that it shall bear true faith and allegiance, inter alia, to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy. Now Section 29B is proposed to be added for cancellation of registration of a political party on ground of non-adherence to the above stipulation. Further, it is being laid down in the Act that no association or a body shall be registered as a political party

if it bears a religious name. Registration of a political party already registered is being made liable to be cancelled if it bears a religious name or its activities do not conform to the mandatory condition of conformity to the principle of secularism. Returning Officers are proposed to be vested with the powers under the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to disqualify candidates who appeal for votes in the name of God or use religious symbols and slogans in their election campaigns.

These amendments need to be deliberated upon in terms of their both individual and cumulative effects and their bearings on the preservation and free flowering of the self-identities of the minorities. This should be an occasion for serious consideration for the Sikh community, as it claims to be both a religious community as well as a political community. Little purpose would be served by generalized polemics against the amendments. What is needed is to evolve an enlightened Sikh viewpoint and to strive for specific constitutional and legal safeguards, say, in the form of proviso to the effect that these amendments shall in no way affect in any manner the fundamental right, under Article 19 of the Constitution, of the minority communities to have and to continue having their distinctive political organisations and institutions, with unfettered right to participate in the national polity, for protecting their communitarian self-identities as well as their communitarian interest articulation, so long as these institutions and organisations do not question the sovereignty and integrity of the country, and further so long as they do not cause disharmony or feeling of hatred against other sections of the society on ground of religion, race, caste, community or language. Another correlative question for the Sikh community to ponder over is that of re-orientation the Sikh praxis in tune with the contemporary constitutional, legal and political realities in India today.

(Written in 1993)

III

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. JASBIR SINGH AHLUWALIA : A PROFILE

Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, one of the major Punjabi poets of the present century, has been recognized in the history of modern Punjabi literature as the pioneer of the Experimentalist-Modernist movement—a trend introduced by him as a poet and literary critic. He has over two dozen books in English and Punjabi in the areas of poetry, literary criticism, Marxism and Sikh philosophy. Some of the Works prepared by him including his poetry have been prescribed as the courses of study in Punjabi at the University level.

His poetry and poetics have been evaluated by leading Punjabi scholars (Prof. Sant Singh Sekhon, Kartar Singh Duggal and others) in *Adhunik Kav Bodh* edited by Dr. Parminder Singh. He was General Secretary of the first-ever Vishav Punjabi Sammelan held in India in 1983.

Dr. Ahluwalia's recent book *The Sovereignty of The Sikh Doctrine* has been profusely appreciated in the national and international academic circles. *The Times of India* in a leading article described it as representing "a new level of critical excellence", deserving "close attention of all those concerned with the intellectual developments in India." *Byword*, a prestigious journal in English, commented that the role of Dr. Ahluwalia in interpreting Sikhism in modern idiom and perspective is comparable to that of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in respect of Hinduism. Angela Dietrich of University of Heidelberg, West Germany, hailed this book as "The most significant contribution to date to the sociology of Sikhism, a field of academic enquiry which has so far been sorely neglected."

As I wrote earlier, it needed a man of very high scholarship, deep commitment to the basics of the Sikh faith and to history who could make out a case for locating the genesis of the Sikh identity. In my opinion, Dr. Ahluwalia has redeemed Sikh scholarship which is now reduced to delineating only the obvious, the customary, the usual and hence the least controversial. Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia is thus both a pioneer and a challenger in his field.

He has emerged as one of the most profound and original scholars and thinkers of the 20th century,

Dr. Jasbir Singh has extensively lectured abroad on Sikhism and Indian philosophy. He represented India at an international literary conference held in

Moscow in 1973.

Dr. Ahluwalia served as Member-Secretary of the Committee—formally set up by Punjab Government in 1986—which prepared, afresh, the Draft of the All India Sikh Gurdwaras Legislation as envisaged in the Rajiv-Longowal Accord on Punjab.

He is, presently, General Secretary of Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Chandigarh.

5 July, 1990

DR. GOPAL SINGH

IV BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

(a) Philosophy

1. *Marxism and Contemporary Reality*
(Asia Publishing House, Bombay)
2. *Sikh Phalsphe Di Bhumika*
(Raghubir Rachna Parkashan, Chandigarh)
3. *The Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrine*
(Bahri Publications, N.D.)
4. *Sikhism Today : The Crisis Within and Without*
(Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Chandigarh)
5. *Sri Akal Takht* (Co-edited)
(Guru Gobind Singh Foundation)
6. *Sikhism and the 21st Century* (edited)
(Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar)
7. *Sikh Chintan*
(Lokgeet Prakashan, Chandigarh)

(b) Punjabi Literature

Poetry :

1. *Kagaz da Ravan* (Navyug, N.D.)
2. *Kur Raja Kur Parja* (Navyug, N.D.)
3. *Sach Ki Bela* (Raghubir Rachna Parkashan)
4. *Bahron Sarape, Andron Guache* (Navyug, N.D.)
5. *Kaya Kapd Tuk Tuk Hosi*
6. *Meri Pritinidh Rachna*
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2. *Prayogsheel Lehar da Sidhantik Pichhokar*
3. *Prayogsheel Punjabi Kavita*
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(Punjabi University Publication)
5. *Punjabi Alochna-Ek Pariche*
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(Raghubir Rachna Parkashan)

(c) English Literature

1. *Trends in Modern Literature*
(Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana)